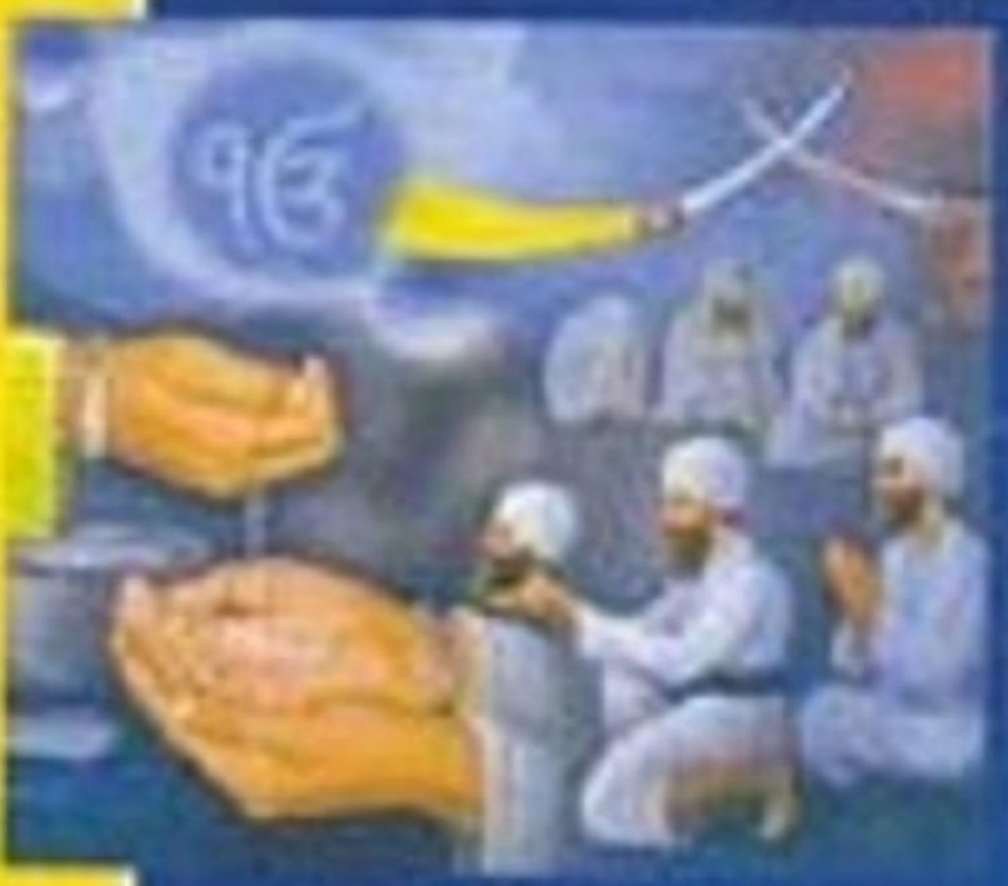
The SIKHS in HISTORY

2002



SANGAT SINGH

Foreword : Prof. Noel Q. King

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With deep reverence

to

the great soul and philosopher

Mahakavi Bhai Sahib Santokh Singh ji

whose

great and monumental work

***Gurpartap Suraj Granth*, 1843**

(Despite the shortcomings

which

came to light later on)

was

straightway acclaimed by

a

grateful community

&

Joseph Davey Cunningham

who

wrote his updated *History of the Sikhs*, (1849),

in advance of his times,

Suffered for it,

fell a victim to the truth,

but

gave the Sikh people

a definitive account of their history

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PREFACE

Histories of the peoples or of the nations have been written and rewritten continuously. With the rise of nationalism in Europe in the 18th century, histories of various European countries, including that of England, have been rewritten during the 19th century from their respective national perspectives. So has been the case during the present century with the histories of colonised people who during and after the colonial rule have found new contours of their past. History of India too has been rewritten from that perspective. For instance, yesterday's extremists and terrorists have been acclaimed as today's heroes and revolutionaries.

With the decolonization of the subcontinent in 1947, the Sikhs for the first time in history came under the tutelage of a reviving Hinduism. Brahminism, whenever in ascendance, has been intolerant of non-conforming faiths. It was time for the Sikhs to reexamine their history and draw appropriate lessons.

That was all the more so, as there have been persistent attempts to overturn the Sikh history and theology. The beginnings were made in the early 17th century by dissident Minas who in collaboration with Brahmins played havoc with Guru Nanak's *Janam Sakhi*, biography. Then followed the Brahminical infiltrators at the hour of the Sikh triumph in the second half of the 18th century. They, in collaboration with Brahminical malcontents, made serious inroads into the Sikh theology. The worst part of it was that the contamination came to be passed on as the original. Even scholars like Bhai Santokh Singh (*Gurpartap Surajgranth*, 12 volumes, 1823 - 43) fell a prey to the duplicity and were seen to propound the untenable viewpoint that the Khalsa was created as a swordarm to protect a decadent and decrepit Hinduism.

The Sikhs throughout history have been deeply influenced by certain basic postulates. One constant factor has been the deep hostility of Brahminism to the Sikh movement. That was quite discernible right from the beginning when Guru Nanak set up a new settlement of Kartarpur Ravi, away from the bustle of the existing habitats, for the new faith to germinate in an atmosphere free from the existing social pressures. The founding of new townships later, of Goindwal, Amritsar, Tarn Taran, Sri Hargobindpura, Kartarpur off-Beas, and eventually Kiratpur and Anandpur Sahib are to be seen in that light. The other facet of the same coin was the Sikh movement's underpinning of the downtrodden classes. This lent them the strength, but further accentuated Brahminical opposition.

The third factor has been the variable quality of the Sikh leadership. For instance, the Sikhs had a unified leadership for about half a century after the assassination of Guru Gobind Singh when they passed through the period of worst persecution, and during the Gurdwara Reform Movement in 1920s, except the final phase when they were splintered. Conversely, the Sikhs have easily fallen prey to their ego problems, and wiles of Brahmins who throughout history have sought to undermine and subvert the Sikh movement. The Sikhs have yet to find a viable counter to the Chanakya *niti* (policy, rather diplomacy) of *sam* (equality), *dan* (concession), *dand* (repression), *bhed* (dissensions) of which they have been victims right from the era of third Sikh Guru, Amar Das (1552-74), and more glaringly from 1699 when the hill chiefs successfully manoeuvred an imperial campaign to retard the consolidation of the nascent Khalsa. The Brahminical Hindus seemed to change sides during Abdali's numerous invasions only to infiltrate Sikhism at the hour of its triumph in latter half of the 18th century, eventually to subvert the Sikh kingdom in post-Ranjit Singh era.

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By 1849, when the Sikhs entered the modern phase of their history, Brahminism had shattered the Sikh political power and shaken Sikhism to its core.

Another complicating factor has been the fact that the Sikhs had emerged as a nation in pre-modern times, when the sub-continent was a conglomeration of various races, tribes, and ethnic groups. The Marathas too emerged a nation under Shivaji, contemporaneously with the Sikhs. Bengalis attained an identical position in the 19th century under inspiration of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's *Anand Math,* and the partition of Bengal in 1905 was rightly considered by them as an attack on Bengali nationalism. Tilak, who had re-invigorated Maratha nationalism by reviving Ganesh festival in 1893, contended shortly before his death in 1920 that India was not yet a nation. Swami Dayanand articulated in parts the Hindus of Punjab and neighbouring provinces. Swami Vivekanand had sought to overarch various brands of Hindu nationalism by instilling in them a sense of pride and dignity.

The mantle of all these Hindu revivalists fell on M.K. Gandhi. He, to begin with, unsuccessfully sought to overarch pan-Hinduism and pan-Islamism represented by Khilafat in early 1920s. His blessing Swami Shraddhanand's *shuddhi* movement (for reconversion of Muslims to Hinduism) in mid-1920s signified that Gandhi had lost interest in Hindu-Muslim modus vivendi. During this half decade, Gandhi showed critical lack of understanding of Sikhism. Right from the beginning, he emitted total hostility to Sikhism and rabidly sought to undermine the Sikh identity.

India was yet to evolve as a nation on the eve of decolonisation of the sub-continent in 1947. Significantly, Lord Louis Mountbatten, the last British Viceroy and independent India's first Governor General, stated in spring 1947 that India was "a great subcontinent of numerous nations." That was notwithstanding M.K. Gandhi being acclaimed father of "our nation", at first by Subhash Chandra Bose for his own reasons in 1944 and later by Jawaharlal Nehru in his inaugural address to the Constituent Assembly in December 1946. Pertinently, Gandhi was proclaimed father of "our nation" before the partition had become inevitable. That only showed the Hindu unwillingness to accommodate the Muslims except on their own terms.

The Congress policy laid down during the freedom struggle for minorities and othernon-conforming groups for the post-independence period, in the words of Lord Wavell, was "to deal with them through bribery, blackmail, propaganda and, if necessary, force." Jinnah fully understood the Hindu gameplan. The Sikhs, who, as if, had put on blinkers, did not, and have come in for that treatment. The Sikh predicament in post-1947 era can directly be attributed to that.

As the Indian saying goes, there are three stipulations that associate a citizen to the state. These are *sunwai* (being heard with patience to get right the wrongs), *izzat* (maintenance of human dignity), and *iqbal* (ability to shape one's destiny). The Sikhs right from the day of Indian independence in 1947 had no *sunwai* with the Indian setup. They lost their *izzat* in 1982 when at the time of Asian Games every Sikh, irrespective of his political affiliation or background or even nationality was humiliated while crossing Haryana, with a few offering apologies. After the Operation Bluestar and the November 1984 pogrom against the Sikhs in all parts of India, they lost *iqbal.*

The book deals with this situation. It is in this background that I have narrated an account of the Sikhs in the context of Indian history.

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This work is like an inverted pyramid, with over half the space going to the contemporary history from 1947 onwards. It spells out the contours of the ongoing struggle - its origins, growth and development, the present state, and possibilities in the near future.

Right from 1947, there have been no attempt to harmonise the Sikh aspirations to those of the Hindus who rather have emerged as a ruling race. The absence of Conflict Resolution departments, much less, faculties, in the Indian Universities and institutes has only helped in the lopsided growth of Indian consciousness.

I have throughout been conscious of the fact that writing contemporary history is a highly sensitive affair. It has been my humble endeavour to present to the student of the Sikh history, a comprehensive account to understand the present Sikh dilemma in the current of their history. As a historian, I have been conscious that facts are sacred, while interpretation is one's own. My commitment has been to history, pure and simple, and not to the personalities involved however high the position they might have held, or, may be holding.

I must place on record my indebtedness to the numerous scholars who, during the last four decades or so, have done considerable work on various facets of the Sikh history. Special mention must be made of the *Spokesman* weekly, New Delhi, founded by S. Hukam Singh in 1951; Punjabi University Patiala's bi-annual journal, *Punjab Past and Present,* launched by Dr. Ganda Singh in 1967; and the voluminous documentation done by Dr. Gurmit Singh, Advocate, formerly of Sirsa, who single-handedly has sought to delineate the correct moorings of the political development of the Sikhs in pre and post independent India.

The need for a reappraisal of the Sikh history has been uppermost with some of the thinking Sikhs during the last two decades or so. The Kendri Sri Guru Singh Sabha right from its coming into being in 1973 was seized of it. By 1980, it made earnest attempts at a reappraisal of a segment of Sikh history. After holding three seminars in 1981 at various centres in Punjab, the then President of Kendri Singh Sabha, S. Hukam Singh, in 1982, wanted me, then on a foreign posting, to go on extraordinary leave to undertake the project. I was conscious that Kendri Singh Sabha was doing me a great honour. A century earlier, Singh Sabha Lahore under the aegis of Prof. Gurmukh Singh had got interested a civil servant, Max Arthur Macauliffe in the Sikh religion. Now a corresponding body was asking me to get interested in the Sikh history as against my current avocation of international and strategic studies. For obvious reasons, it was not possible to straight away accede to Hukam Singh's plea. But the idea remained embedded in my mind.

I am thankful to the History Board of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Amritsar, especially Principal Satbir Singh, for appointing me, in the autumn of 1990, Chairman of a small committee to undertake the writing of modern Sikh history. Since I was not willing to accept the Gurdwara funds for the project, I have done the work on my own.

I am thankful to S. Charanjit Singh of the *Spokesman* weekly for providing me some of the valuable material. His vast knowledge of the source material on the recent phase has been quite useful.

I am also thankful to Mr. Justice R.S. Narula, former Chief Justice of Punjab and Haryana High Court for sparing some time to go through parts of the book. He offered useful suggestions.

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The opinions expressed in the book are my own and I am fully responsible for them.

Kartic Purnima, Guru Nanak's Birthday *Sangat Singh*
November 18, 1994

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

I have had a high satisfaction at the first edition of this work, published and released in New York in June last, being widely acclaimed by the Sikh community all over North America and U.K.

At the readers' continuous suggestions, I have brought the footnotes at the bottom of the page. This also takes care of the small changes which emanated from the people. Their other suggestion to bring out a Punjabi version of it, remains high on my agenda.

I am now taking this opportunity to present second edition of this work.

Poh Sudi 7, (*Guru Gobind Singh's Birthday*), *Sangat Singh*
December 28, 1995.

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BOOK ONE

INTRODUCTION

1
The Sikh Problem

Sikhism stands today at the same crossroads where Buddhism once stood at the beginning of the 9th century. Just as the Buddhists and their places of worship came under attack from a reviving Brahminism under the inspiration of Adi Shankaracharya, so too Rave the Sikhs come under the assault from not very dissimilar forces. Jainism, which was equally threatened, managed to survive by transforming itself so as to be encompassed within the framework of Hinduism. Buddhism, which had already spread far beyond India, could not compromise its religious tenets and was exterminated. Today, Sikhism has spread outside India and cannot accept the stipulated modifications required to fall within the framework of Hinduism. Therefore, it is faced with a struggle for survival. This has been intensified since Indira Gandhi's aim of physically liquidating it, in much the same way as Buddhism was once liquidated.

Gautam Buddha, like the Sikh Gurus, earned the deep-rooted hostility of Brahminism because of his revolt against the Brahminical caste system, priestcraft and rituals. Buddha's message of universal brotherhood and equality, as that of Guru Nanak later, was considered subversive of *varnashram dharma*, of Brahminical hegemony. Also, Buddha, and Guru Nanak later, preached in the popular language of the common man, Prakrit/Pali and Punjabi and gave them their respective scripts Brahmi and Gurmukhi.[1] It was designed to break the monopoly of Sanskrit and strike at the roots of Brahminical dominance.

The Buddhist concept of egalitarianism and democratic social structure in the organisation of their *Sangha* (from which was probably derived the Sikh concept of *sangat* - congregation) was in sharp contrast to the elitist Brahminical social order. Buddhism in India was at its peak during Ashok' s reign and later under Kushans. Subsequently, during the Gupta period, which is considered the Golden period of Hinduism, Brahminism turned the tables on Buddhism. The Buddhist *Sanghas* which had been centers of political power were persistently attacked in the effort to weaken their power. Buddha and Buddhism were subjected to venomous diatribes virtually amounting to a hate campaign in various Smritis, Puranas and other classical works including those of Manu, Chanakya and others. To cite an instance, Lord Buddha had breathed his last at Harramba near Monghyr. The Brahmins propagated that if any one dies at Harramba or Monghyr, he will straight away go to hell, or be born a donkey.

The hatred took many forms, particularly, the ongoing and selective attack on the Buddhists and their places of worship. Firstly, Brahmins entered the Buddhist Sangha to subvert Buddhism from within: The introduction of Tantrakism in Buddhism was a case in point. Secondly, Brahmins did not desist from cooperating with foreign invaders like Huns and early Kushans to strike at the roots of Buddhist power. For instance, they cooperated with Hun invader Mihirgul, who not only built Saiva temples but also destroyed Buddhist monasteries and *Maths* in his Kingdom.[1a]

By the time of Fa-Hien's visit to India in the 5th century AD, Kapilvastu had become a jungle and Gaya had been laid waste and desolate.[2] Saivite Brahmin King Sasank of Bengal carried out acts

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of vandalism against the Buddhists, destroyed the footprints of Lord Buddha at Pataliputra, burnt the Bodhi tree under which he had meditated, and devastated numerous monasteries and scattered their monks.[3]

During the next hundred years, because of an intolerant society and constant persecution, there was mass scale migration of Buddhist monks and lay Buddhists to China and East Asia. Jawaharlal Nehru mentions of one such wave of migration in 526 AD when the grahd patriarch of Indian Buddhism, Bodhidharma, accompanied by other monks sailed from South India for Canton in China. Nehru adds "that in one province of China alone - the Lao Yang - there were at this time more than 3,000 Indian monks and 10,000 Indian families."[4] All of them and others who followed later to China, Tibet or to Korea and Japan were fugitives from oppressive Brahminism, which threatened their very existence.

Buddhism had a short revival under Emperor Harsha. This was followed by a steady decline. The death of Harsha in 648 AD saw an intensification of Brahmin-Buddhist confrontation and was in a large measure responsible for the political degeneration in north India. It saw the emergence of small principalities and dynastic rulers who favoured Hindu revivalism.

This period also saw the advent of Islam with the invading Arabs. It constituted a retrieving feature for the Buddhists who had, as testified by the contemporary *Chachnama*, helped Mohammad Bin Qasim in his conquest in Sind in 710 AD. This was reflective of widespread contacts between the Arabs and the Buddhists, and regular social interaction between the two. Hiuen Tsang talks of Buddhist monasteries in Persia, Mosul and Khorasan, Iraq or Mesopotamia right up to the borders of Syria.[5] The Buddhists saw their democratic principles and social egalitarianism adequately reflected in the Islam of the Arabs and there was growing conviviality between Islam and Buddhism in India during the period.

The rise of Adi Shankaracharya in the late 8th-early 9th century, saw the intensification of Brahmin-Buddhist conflict, rather an all-out Brahminical onslaught on Buddhism. The Buddhist *Sangha* which frowned upon the killing of animals for food (in fact during Harsha's reign a state edict had been promulgated prohibiting the slaughter of animals for food) provided Shankaracharya-led Brahmins, then voracious beefeaters, with an alibi to mobilise the lumpen elements to attack the Buddhists and their monasteries. Plunder was another factor as the Buddhist monasteries were rich and affluent centres amidst a decadent society. This resulted in large scale vandalism, in destruction of Buddhist personal property, Buddhist monasteries, stupas, their images and idols.

Shankaracharya himself killed hundreds of Buddhists of Nagarjunakonda in Andhra Pradesh and in the words of A.H. Longhurst "wantonly smashed" the Buddhist temples there. Nagarjuna, it may be mentioned, had been a great Buddhist missionary and Nagarjunakonda was "one of the largest and most important Buddhist settlement in southern India".[6] Shankaracharya, thereafter, led the group of marauders to Mahabodhi temple in Gaya, and they indulged in large scale destruction of Buddhist monasteries and stupas. The Brahmins took over the temple under their control.[7]

His appetite whetted, Shankaracharya personally led a motivated group through the Himalayas. The object now was the Buddhist centre at Badrinath. His reputation of wholesale destruction of Buddhists preceded him. The Buddhists chose to abandon Badrinath. They threw the statue of the presiding deity in Alakananda river at the foot of the temple and escaped to Tibet. The centre was taken over by the Brahmins. Keeping in view its importance amidst a host of

ancient places of historical importance, Shankaracharya named it as one of the centres of Brahminism.[8] So was with Buddhist centres at Puri, Sringeri and Tirupati.

The fate of Buddhist property and their places of worship especially in central and southern India was similar, when Saivism asserted its dominance through the armed strength. The fact that Shankaracharya travelled widely and converted Buddhist centres into Brahminical centres of learning, *maths*, at Badrinath in the north, Sringeri (and Kanchipuram) in the south, Puri in the east and Dwarka in the west, the impact of his militant campaign against Buddhism was all pervasive. Buddhism almost disappeared from India. Over the next couple of centuries, aptly termed Dark Age, it flickered in different regions before it finally became extinct.

Jawaharlal Nehru traces the "cultural unity of India" and the emergence of "common Indian consciousness" to this period of Shankaracharya's annihilation of Buddhism,[9] for India now became a homogenised Hindu state. But the advent of Islam, which, like Buddhism, was already an international religion, introduced a discordant element. It is truism for Hindu historians to say that Shankaracharya defeated the Buddhists because of his superior intellect and arguments, and that was why the Buddhists agreed to give up their faith and be absorbed into Brahminism! The arguments were carried with the help of fire and power, and not logic or persuasion. Jawaharlal Nehru, the acclaimed builder of modern India, was no exception and gave expression to his Brahminical proclivities in his presentation of historical processes.[10] He later sought to make partial amends by organising the celebration of 2,500 years of the *Mahapari-nirvana* of Lord Buddha on national, indeed international, scale. Buddhism was revived in India during the 20th century with the conversion of some backward classes led by Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar. But this was on a limited scale, and Brahmins intended to keep the faith within the framework of Hinduism.

Buddhism had become non-violent but in spite of that, it took Hinduism, perhaps because of lack of centralised organisation, several centuries to exterminate it. The Brahminical social order was not always successful. The Buddhists, the general mass of them who had been alienated from Brahminism, chose to accept Islam which provided them equality and met their natural instincts and aspirations. That was the reason why north-western India including Kashmir, western part of Punjab and Sind was Islamised. That also happened to the Buddhists in Bihar and Bengal. The contemporary *Shunya Purana* and *Dharm Puja Vithan* bear testimony to that.

It is remarkable that district gazetteers of the Gangetic valley speak of the existence of Muslim societies in 10th and 11th centuries before the arrival of Muhamad Ghauri.[11] Hindu historians, however, plead inadequate understanding of the conversion of the rural elite and large sections of peasantry to Islam in eastern India at that time.[12] They fight shy of facing this phenomenon, the upshot of backlash of violent extermination of Buddhism by Shankaracharya.

In Afghanistan -Turkistan, Bamiyan and Kabul - the Buddhist faith and Kingdom were stamped out by the Saivite Brahmin Minister, Kallar or Kulusha, in the second half of 9th century. He effected a coup, overthrew the last Buddhist King, Lagaturman, and founded Hindu Shahi Kingdom.[13] In tune with the guidelines laid down by Shankaracharya, Kulusha killed the Buddhists in thousands and levelled their monasteries and citadels. It was during the course of Hindu Shahi vandalism that the Buddhist structures in Bamiyan, Gardez, Laghman and other places were disfigured or destroyed.[14]

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Buddhists, persecuted harshly by Brahmins, now became the followers of Ibn Karami, a local Sufi Pir, and were called Karamis. They placed a statue of Allah on his throne in place of Buddha set on the Lotus.[15] The Karami sect was the half-way between Buddhism and Islam, and assumed great importance in the life of Ghur, Ghazni and Qusdar.

Al-Beruni mentions that by 950 AD when the Hindu Shahi Kingdom was at its zenith, Kabul was Muslim.[16] That was half a century before Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni began his campaigns in India. Mahmud appointed teachers to instruct the people of Ghur in the precepts of Islam after his campaign of India in 1010-1011.[17] Mahmud Ghazni's campaigns against the places of Hindu worship in India including the breaking of Hindu idols at Jawalamukhi, Mathura and Somnath temples were, in part, in retribution to earlier Hindu onslaught on the Buddhist places of worship which rankled in the minds of the people. Brahminism had sowed the seeds of iconoclasm in the sub-continent and now they reaped the whirlwind. It may be mentioned here that Mahmud Ghazni's general, Tilak or Tilaka, son of Jaisen or Jayasena, educated in Kashmir, was a Buddhist.

The destruction of Hindu places of worship from now on became a regular feature with the Muslim invaders of India. For instance, Qutubuddin Aibak demolished 27 Hindu and Jain temples at Delhi and used the material for the construction of Qutab Minar.[18] No Buddhist monastery was destroyed as these had already been demolished by the Hindus! Qutab Minar was designed to teach the lesson of subjection to the Hindus! It also marked the end of the Indo-Aryan period of Indian history. The contemporary Hindu was conscious of that. Compilation of *Shunya* (Zero) *Purana* during the period was recognition of the Zero sum game.

The Hindus straightaway developed a deep-rooted hatred of the Muslims and in the words of Al-Beruni enclosed themselves in a shell calling the new rulers *miechhas*, impure. That coloured the Hindu nationalism which was born from a sense of defeat. [19] Buddhism became extinct in India around that time, though Hinduism too was subjugated for next eight centuries. That was the retribution meted out to Hinduism, or was the price paid by the Hindus for the crime of violent extermination of Buddhism from the land of its birth.

With the Indian independence in 1947, Hindu revivalism underpinned by the state power and machinery resumed its onward march after a hiatus of one thousand years. The first task undertaken immediately after independence by the new government, avowing secularism and composite nationalism, was the decision to reconstruct, at the state expenses, the Somnath Temple which, in the words of K. M. Munshi, had served as a galling reminder of the degradation of the Hindus. And, the Cabinet meeting was presided over by Jawaharlal Nehru.[20] Only a year earlier in his *Discovery of India* (1946) he had given expression to his atavistic perception of Hindu revivalism and in the words of Shaikh Mohammad Abdullah (*Atish-i-Chinar*), he "regarded himself as an instrument to establish, once again, that old dispensation". It was another matter that he was later acclaimed the apostle of Indian secularism. That was an upshot of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad's working on his megalomania, especially after Sardar Vallabhbhai Jhaverbhai Patel's death in December 1950. Presently, the mosque constructed at the site in the 17th century was demolished. It was contended that protagonists of Allah had migrated to Pakistan, and those who stand up for the mosque would be made to do so. Sikhism which came up during this thousand-year interregnum, as a distinct religion, has since been the butt of Hinduism.

The story as to how the Sikhs, who were the third party at the time of Indian independence, have been reduced to a non-existent role, and how using the Hindu card, the leadership of the

Indian National Congress (which has been in power during the last 43 out of 47 years) has gradually pushed the Sikhs out of the national mainstream which enabled Indira Gandhi to launch her Sikh war, makes a grim reading.

To begin with, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, the acclaimed father of the nation, did not accept Sikhism as a religion distinct from Hinduism; and the Sikhs trustingly - a trust that immediately after independence was betrayed - placed all their eggs in the Congress basket without suspecting the Hindus. They are now paying the price for that trust. As of now, thinking Sikhs all over the world are apprehensive of the very existence of Sikhism in India as a vibrant faith. With their back to the wall, the Sikhs face Hobson's choice.

In retrospect, Hinduism's extermination of Buddhism did not lead to wholesome results. The cost-benefit ratio was in an adverse scale. But the Hindus have learnt one thing from history that they cannot learn anything. This is not the first time that the Sikhs face extinction in India. Attempts have been made earlier as well.

How will the Sikhs fare now? Will history repeat itself? Or, will it be rewritten, this way or that? Only time will tell - the gruesome time that lies ahead.

Footnotes:

1. Gurmukhi alphabets for Punjabi language were prevalent even before Guru Nanak. Kabir earlier had used Gurmukhi alphabets when Brahmins of Benaras violently reacted to his use of devnagri alphabets, which they contended was devbhasha, language of the gods. Kabir had picked up Gurmukhi alphabets prevalent for Punjabi language during his several journeys through Punjab for Haj. For Kabir's acrostic in Gurmukhi script see Adi Granth or Adi Sri Guru Granth Sahib, pp. 360-63. It also appears in the same form in Kabir Bijak, containing the collected hymns of Kabir.

1a. E.B. Havell, *History of Aryan Rule in India*, (London, n.d.), p. 269.

2. Jawaharlal Nehru, *Glimpses of World History*, (1934-35) (Delhi, 1982 reprint), p. 105.
3. Walters, *On Yuang Chwang*, Vol. II, p. 165 quoted in R.C. Majumdar and K.K. Dasgupta (Eds), *A Comprehensive History of India*, Vol. III, Part II, (Delhi, 1983), p. 837.
4. Nehru, n. 2., p. 115.
5. Ibid, p. 125. According to Al-Beruni, the Buddhists had extended their sway upto Syria, but later with the rise of Zarathustra, Buddhists were pushed back east of Balkh. Cf. Edward C. Sachau(Ed), *Alberuni's India*, (London, 1888), Vol I, p 21.
6. A.H. Longhurst, *Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India*, No. 54, *The Antiquities of Nagarjunakonda*, (Delhi, 1938), pp. 6-7.
7. The formation of Mahabodhi society by Ananganika Dharmpala of Ceylon in 1891 signalled start of the proceedings, and it-was restored to the Buddhists after six decades of litigation, only partially after Indian independence. Brahmins still control some parts of the shrine. They have a strangulating control over the management. The Hindus still emphasise that Lord Buddha was the tenth Avatar of Vishnu, to the chagrin of the Buddhists.
8. The Digambar Jains credibly contend that originally Badrinath was a Jain temple with the idol of Rishabh Dev as the presiding deity. When Buddhists took over the temple from the Jains, they did not break the idol but treated it as a Buddhist one, as Buddhist and Jain idols were identical in sitting pose with both hands at the naval in meditating posture. Shankaracharya had the idol

of Rishabh Dev recovered and reinstalled. Later to give it a distinct Hindu frame, two more arms which are quite distinct to the naked eye, were added.

The fact that Shankaracharya restored the Jain idol at Badrinath signifies that the Jains, unlike the Buddhists, in face of Brahminical atrocities, by the time, had agreed to function within the framework of Brahminism and accepted Brahiminical ascendancy. Cf, Balbhadra Jain, *Bharat Ke Digmbar Jain Tirath*, Part I, (Bombay, Bharat Varshya Digambar Jain Tirath Kshetra Committee, 1974), pp. 91-93.

The author is thankful to Mr. Justice M. L. Jain, former Judge of Delhi High Court for bringing this to his notice.

9. Nehru, n. 2, pp. 128-29.
10. In a revealing passage about his 'making', Nehru wrote, "Behind me lie somewhere in the sub-conscious, racial memories of hundred or whatever the numbers may be, generations of Brahmins. 1 cannot gel rid of that past inheritance..." Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography*. (1936), (Delhi. 1980), p. 596.

In the words of Madhu Limaye, the socialist leader, Jawaharlal Nehru practised both racialism and casteism, despite modern upbringing and outlook. See Madhu Limaye, "A Wealthy Bania and a Socialist Brahmin" in the weekend *Telegraph*, (Calcutta), November 21, 1987.

11. Cf. Mohammad Habib and Khaliq Ahmad Nizami (Eds), *A Comprehensive History India*, Vol. V, (Delhi. 1987), p. 138.
12. Ravinder Kumar, *The Making of Nation: Essays in Indian History and Politics*, (Delhi, 1989). p. 179.
13. Sachau, n. 5, Vol 11, pp. 10, & 361.
14. Gurbax Singh, Presidential Address (Medieval Section) Punjabi University, Patiala, *Punjab History Conference, Proceedings*, March 17-19, 1989, Part 1, p. 92. Lord Buddha's Statue at Bamiyan in Afghanistan was disfigured in 856 AD.
15. Habib & Nizami, n. 11, p. 149.
17. Cf. n. 15 op cit.
18. In 1988 while carrying on repairs, the artisans of Archeological Survey of India removed a disjointed slab for refixing and found the sculpture of a Hindu goddess on the reverse side.
19. Nirad C. Chaudhuri, The Auto biography of an Unknown Indian (1951), (London, 1987 p.404.)

Paradoxically, Muslim rule was not an unmitigated disaster for Brahminism. With the overthrow of the bulk of Hindu rulers. Brahmins gained tremendously as leaders of a decadent society, imposing wholesale caste system and ritualism - priestcraft, dark idolatry, rank inequities, black superstitions, &c - on all classes of non-Muslims, given the nomenclature of 'Hindu' by the Muslim rulers. This helped to buttress Brahminism which now emerged as Hinduism of modern times. As quid pro quo. Brahmins cooperated with the new rulers to quieten the countryside, in the process, making the temple with images of gods and goddesses, social inequities and extortion of wealth from a hapless people, as centres of village life. Taking advantage of the Muslim rule. Brahmins also interpolated various Shastras, Smrities, Puranas and whole body of religious texts. They discarded Brahminism of Vedic Age which had been overtaken by Buddhism and introduced Kshatriya Princes, Lord Rama and Lord Krishna as apostles of reformed Brahminical faith. That also took care of their alignment with Rajput Princes. That buttressed their theocratic over lordship of Hindu society right from Rajputana to Indo-Gangetic valley to post-Shivaji Maharashtra to Bijapur and Golcunda. The only exception was Punjab which came under the egalitarian influence of the Sikh movement of Guru Nanak and his successors.

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When the Hindu and Muslim rulers came under the Europeans, Brahmins collaborated with them and emerged as greatest beneficiaries. Like Hindu and Muslim rulers, the East India Company derived large annual profits from the management of temples. The English emerged as patrons of Brahminical priestcraft and idolatry and of temple-girls to satiate their carnal requirements in the absence of English women from home. First Governor General, Warren Hastings', establishing Caste Courts, to excommunicate one from Hindu caste, had devastating effect on recalcitrants who resisted writing of their caste along with their names. Sir William Jones, appointed Judge of Supreme Court in 1784, who emerged as the foremost Orientalist and founder of Asiatic Society, in collaboration with Brahmins, brought out archaic Manu Smriti and other spurious and unjust Shastras, and enforced them as authoritative texts of Hindu law, on all non-Muslims and non-Christians. With the British divesting themselves of management of religious endowments in 1863. Brahmin's triumph was complete in taking over the management of Hindu temples, and enforcing a graded iniquitous caste and entry system in to the temples. That brought to a creeching halt efforts of social reformers to modernise Hinduism. In short. Brahminism throughout history has used all contrivances including cooperation with foreigners to uphold Brahminical supremacy and imperialism over the general body of "Hindus'.

Cf. Swami Dharma Theertha, The Menace of Hindu Imperialism (Lahore, 1946), chapters xii to xvi and ad passim.

The anther is thankful to Mr. Ajit Singh Sohota of Nepean, ONT, Canada for bringing this to his notice.

20. Cf. V.B. Kulkarni, *K.M. Munshi* (Builders of Modern India) (Delhi. Publication Division, Government of India. 1982) p. 216. At Gandhi's instance, the funds for the temple were raised by voluntary contributions.

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BOOK TWO

SIKHISM IN MEDIEVAL HISTORY

2
Evolution of the Sikh Panth
(1469 - 1708)

In 1499, at the age of 30, after a great deal of meditation, Guru Nanak's cosmic consciousness blossomed in full. He had a revelation, or, as the *Janam Sakhis* narrate, was led to the presence of God, and commissioned to propagate His message to mankind. This laid the foundations of his mission. By that time he was married - had a wife and two sons - and was working as *Modi* (Storekeeper) with the Nawab of Sultanpur, which pointed to his being a well read man.

It was during the process of revelation and the vision of God, that Guru Nanak recited the *mul mantra*, the basic precept, which sums up the divine personality of God. This constitutes the core of Sikh philosophy and provides the quintessence of the teachings of Sikh Gurus and Bhaktas contained in *Adi Granth*, or *Adi Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, the Sikh scripture.

It has been translated and interpreted variously. Elsewhere, the author's translation reads:

The Only Infinite One (1), the Only Supreme Being - God (*oankar*), the Eternal (*sati*), the Universal Spirit (*namu*), the Creator (*karta*), the All-pervading (*purakhu*), the Sovereign (*nirbhau*), the Harmonious (*nirvairu*), the Immortal (*akala*), the Embodiment (*murti*), the Un-incarnated (*ajuni*), the Self-existent (*saibhan*), the Enlightener (*guru*), the Bountiful (*prasad*).[1]

The translation by Principal Jodh Singh with whom Prof Sahib Singh and Bhai Vir Singh broadly agree, reads "There is but one God; Sati (means the being who was, is and shall be) his name; the creator all-pervading, without fear, without enmity, whose existence is unaffected by time, who does not take birth, Self-existent; (to be realised) through the Grace of the Guru."[2]

M. A. Macauliffe, in his monumental work, *The Sikh Religion*, who undertook it in collaboration with the Sikh reformers, translated the invocation as follows: "There is but one God whose name is True, the creator, devoid of fear and enmity, immortal, unborn, self-existent, great and bountiful". At places he has joined the last *two* words to yield the meaning "by the favour of the Guru".[3]

Guru Nanak during the process of revelation gained new vistas of cosmic consciousness that divine light permeates the entire universe and is the only source of light in all human beings. Universal brotherhood of humankind and common heritage, shorn of any limiting angularities, formed an essential part of the revelation. At the time, he recited a couple of hymns expressive of God's greatness, His infinite wisdom and His benevolent participation in human affairs vis a vis his own limitations. God, in short, is One, (and he said so in digit 1 to prevent a change in meanings and emphasise that He is indivisible), Ineffable, beyond comprehension and expression, and full of Grace.

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Guru Nanak's experience was infinite. But this had to be expressed within the limitations of human expression, the limitations of the language. At times, Guru Nanak's language is terse and impregnated with philosophical meanings and substance.

The first statement made by Guru Nanak after his enlightenment was *na koi Hindu*, *na Musalman* - there was neither a Hindu, nor a Muslim. He in the process asserted universal humanism. Everyone was the child of one God.

This cryptic statement has also been interpreted to mean that there was no true Hindu or true Muslim. And that, neither Hinduism nor Islam was relevant; what was relevant was his personal experience.

That, Guru Nanak was able to make a statement challenging the supremacy, if not the validity, of Islam at the close of 15th century and go unpunished by the Muslim rulers for blasphemy, was reflective of the change in the social milieu.

To begin with, Hindus declared Muslims *miechhas*, unclean, and Muslims reciprocated by declaring Hindus infidels. In the face of the armed superiority of Muslims, Hindus were quick to shut themselves behind the caste hierarchy, and narrow the parameters of social interaction. In the words of Lunia, "They abandoned honesty and sincerity, straightforwardness and integrity of character and imbibed vices like selfishness, cleverness and skill in deceit and evasion" which still characterise the Hindu society.[4]

New Muslim rulers - the Turks and Afghans - were different in temperament to the early Arab invaders. The mass-scale destruction of Hindu places of worship under Mahmud Ghazni and later Mohamad Ghori was gradually followed by lessening of the harshness of the earlier aggressive Muslim demeanour. However, in the words of A. L. Srivastava, "The Turko-Afghan rule produced an unhealthy result on the character and dignity of our race. Our upper and middle class people, who had to come into daily contact with the rulers, were obliged to conceal their true feelings about their religion, culture and sundry other matters and to develop a kind of servility of character in order to get on in the world. Many of our men imbibed low cunning and deceit. Therefore, the Hindus, in general, lost manliness of character and straightforwardness of behaviour."[5]

The emergence of Sufi mystics on the social horizon helped to usher in an era of discourse within Hinduism[6] and within Islam[7] and at places between the two.

The Punjab was in the throes of social convulsions. Pakpattan, Multan and Sirhind emerged as main Sufi centres, while traditional Hinduism knuckled under Sidhas, Naths or Yogis who reduced religion to a series of jantra-mantra-tantra fetishes. The Brahmins too fell into meaningless rituals, more so as they recited Sanskrit hymns without understanding their purport. The study of Sanskrit had sharply declined.

The issues that agitated the minds of the people were naturally the intense divisions within Hinduism and Islam, and relevance of God as a factor in social interaction between various sections of society. Also disconcerting to the society was the state of general oppression which equally affected the various classes of the people.

Basically, the issues impinged on social responsibility. These were beyond the pale of any school of the Hindu thought. Neither the Vedas, the Shastras, and Smritis, nor the various religious teachers and law givers - none of them - laid down social responsibility on any one, much less a section of the society, to ameliorate the socio-political conditions of the people. Rather by laying emphasis on asceticism and world-withdrawing doctrines that caused withdrawal from productive work and dependence on alms for sustenance, the Hindu socio-religious orders had become parasitic and irresponsible. Even the Bhaktas, who were critical of the caste system and repudiated essentials of Vaishnavism, advocated individual *moksha*. They were not for acceptance of social responsibility. None of them, in consonance with Hindu thought, raised his voice against the prevalent political oppression, despite some of them including Kabir and Namdev facing personal persecution at the hands of the rulers. A sort of dissimulation characterised all classes of the Hindus including the upper and middle classes, and induced docility. Their pacifism helped to further consolidate socio-political isolation of the Hindu society.

The perspective with the Muslims, being the ruling class, including the Indian Muslims, was quite different.

It was reserved for Guru Nanak to charter a new order by an intermixture in equal measure of religious, social and political responsibilities into a composite whole, encompassing both spiritual and temporal spheres.[8] He envisioned a social revolution that would pull down the tyrants and exploiters, and elevate the humble and the meek. His metaphysical experience confirmed his earlier formulations.

Shortly, when Guru Nanak started on world tour which, unlike any other prophet much less a Hindu religious teacher, took him to all parts of the sub-continent and beyond, he was confronted by Shaikh Brahm or Ibrahim with the cardinal question, was he a Hindu or a Muslim? To Guru Nanak such type of questions were irrelevant. He averred, "If I say I am a Hindu, I tell a lie. I am also not a Muslim." Similarly at Mecca, he skirted the question of inter-se position of Hinduism and Islam, by saying that without good deeds, both Hindus and Muslims in the Court of God would rue the day. It was in this vein that Guru Arjan later adopted Kabir's hymn that "We are neither Hindus, nor Muslims. The One, Allah-Ram is breath of our body."[9] To the specific question by Siddhas as to "Who is thy Guru", Guru Nanak stated explicitly that the Word (of Lord) was the Guru.[10]

Throughout his discourses in the sub-continent and beyond, Guru Nanak did not quote Hindu scriptures as an authority for what he was saying. He was relying on the revelation, his personal experience of the Lord. That was an overriding authority for the views he formulated and the course of action he adopted.

Guru Nanak launched on four odysseys to "search for the saints".[11] He went to places for worship of all denominations -Indian and Semitic - in India and abroad, as his revelation had universal validity, and he had the consciousness or moral obligation to transmit his precept to all. And, he established centres for preaching of his mission all over the places. The first center he established was headed by Sajjan, a reformed Thug! For his avocation, Sajjan was maintaining both a temple and a mosque. After he came under the influence of Guru Nanak, he gave up thuggee and was a transformed man. He was now eminently qualified to head a socio-religious centre for humanity, cutting across sectarian lines.

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The odysseys took Guru Nanak to all parts of the sub-continent and beyond to Tibet, Middle East and Central Asia. There are contemporary local sources in Assamese *Vehis* (regarding visit to Kamrup), Oriya[12] and Ceylonese history,[13] besides an inscription in classical Turkoman language with an admixture of Arabic in Baghdad testifying to Guru Nanak's visits to those parts.[14] Guru Nanak's taking the young son of the then successor of Abdul Qadir Gailani, also known as Ghaus-i-Pak and Pir Dastgir (whose mausoleum is in the heart of Baghdad) to a trans-region journey into the outer-world, forms part of Baghdadi folk lore.

There are three Baghdadi folk sayings about Baba Nanak. These being, *Inta Baba Nanak* (Are you Baba Nanak?), *A' balak Baba Nanak* (As if, he is Baba Nanak, or he pretends to be Baba Nanak), and *Ana Mu Baba Nanak* (I am not Baba Nanak). These were the Baghdadi people's common reaction to all those who till the second world war in this century talked about or enquired of the visit of heavenly constellations, some at regular intervals, from the outer world to this world. For Baghdadi common man, only Baba Nanak knew as he had demonstrated the truth during his visit in the early 16th century.[15]

Guru Nanak's mission had all the elements of a determined protagonist. At places, he entered into bitter debates. At Kurukshetra, he cooked meat (of a stag killed in game and offered by a devotee) on the solar eclipse which led to an unpleasant debate with Brahmins about what constituted legitimate and not-legitimate or violence and non-violence in. human affairs. He condemned human exploitation and hypocrisy.[16] At Haridwar, his simple act of offering water in reverse direction, towards Kartarpur, (which showed Guru Nanak had some land at that place for sustenance of his family and where he finally settled during the last two decades or so of his life) challenged the validity of the Brahmins' beliefs (they were offering water to the rising sun), and led to the raising of tempers. He severely condemned the Jain practices, raised a furore at Mecca by asserting the omnipresence of God and oneness of humanity. At Baghdad, his talk of thousands of upper and nether regions invited the wrath of the orthodoxy. In the last phase of his life, he entered into an acrimonious debate with Jogis or Yogis at Achal Batala.

Throughout his life, Guru Nanak preached universal humanism. His teachings were for all, irrespective of their present religious orientations or caste predilections. In the words of Bhai Gurdas, he brought fusion of all four castes, nay those within the caste system and the outcastes.[17] In that context, he at times reconstructed both Hinduism and Islam, and wanted their protagonists - the Naths, Yogis, Brahmins, Vedantists, Vaishnavas, Shaivas, Buddhists, Jains, Shaikhs, Maulvis, Qazis - to rise above the mundane considerations to the essence of religion - a social and spiritual interaction with humanity. He gave his own version of what constituted a true yogi, a true Brahmin, a true Muslim and what it meant to recite five Muslim prayers. In the process, he revealed the superiority of his transcendent experience and vision.

He repudiated all the essentials of Hinduism. He regarded this world as an abode of God, a place for practising positive, good, deeds. He stood for living the life of a householder and net running away from the problems of the world. He struck at the roots of *varna ashram dharma*, condemned caste system, and renunciation of the world for spiritual attainment. His repudiation of the concept of *avatarvad*, of God's taking a human birth, was inherent in one of His attributes in *mill mantra*, of *ajuni*, un-incarnated, not being subject to birth and death. He highlighted the evils of Brahminical domination and berated the cowardice of the people and many other evils of the contemporary society. He was for a social reconstruction that would generate a self-propelling

social growth. The *Asa di Var*, a composition of Guru Nanak, sung in early hours of the morning in Sikh shrines, highlights the salient contradictions between Hinduism and Guru Nanak's teachings.

What, however, set apart Guru Nanak's mission was his comments on, or delving into, the political situation. He called for social responsibility in public administration and introduction of the concept of welfare state.[18]

It was in the context of the totality of societal involvement that Guru Nanak reviewed the contemporary political situation. He compared the rulers to butchers, and administrators to dogs, who oppressed and exploited the people in and out, without any qualms. He condemned the rampant corruption in the administration, including the maladministration of justice by Qazis.[19] He reprimanded the *Kshatriyas* (warrior caste amongst Hindus) for giving up their role as defenders of the society and instead collaborating with the oppressive rulers. He condemned the people for their pusillanimity, unreasoning and ignorance. He wanted the downtrodden to ameliorate their place in society. He associated himself with them instead of the aristocracy. Similarly, he accorded women equal status in society, in sharp contrast to the existing practices. Following him, Bhai Gurdas mentions woman or wife as one-half, man being the other half, to make a composite social unit.

Guru Nanak's views were made further explicit in his four hymns depicting conditions of India at the time of Babur's invasion.[20] He portrayed a heart-rending scene of conditions of both the aristocracy and the laity - both Hindus and Muslims irrespective of creed. He spoke against tyranny in the language of blood and tears. He condemned the Lodhi rulers for their misrule and disfiguring the gem of Hindustan. He set new standards to judge political authorities. Through freedom of expression, he generated national awareness. "The differentiation of the religious elite brought a new level of tension and new possibility of conflict and change into the social scene. It implied that political acts could be judged in terms of standards that the political authorities cannot fully control."[21] As such, Guru Nanak's teachings provided the ideology and social cohesion for resistance to oppression. To Guru Nanak, Lord was destroyer of the demons.[22] He viewed submission to tyranny with disdain.

Guru Nanak took a special note of Babur's use of match-lock gun which according to Babur's *Memoirs* proved decisive in his victory. Guru Nanak, like Lord Krishna in *Mahabharta*, was not against war, as such. He, however, wanted the people to equip themselves with sophisticated weapons to create a strategic balance of forces, or a balance of terror (which in itself is sufficient to prevent a war), to pave the way for an equal contest, if need be.[23]

It was Guru Nanak who laid the foundations of martyrdom in Sikhism. He said, "If you want to play the game of devotion, place your head on the palm of your hand, and follow my way. Once you take a step in this direction, you should not hesitate in laying down your life, and not look back."[24] Again, "O Lord, if it pleases Thee, one plies the sword, and the head is chopped off the neck."[25] Life and death is in the hands of Lord, and giving and taking of it is not in the hands of man. One need not be afraid of death. "To die is the right of the brave, if one dies for an approved cause."[26] One such cause he mentioned was to live with dignity, the loss of which made one's living *haram*, sinful.[27] These concepts of Guru Nanak later laid the foundations of the Khalsa on the basis of self-sacrifice and martyrdom.

Guru Nanak cast off the costume of a hermit, and spent the last 18 years of his life as a householder at Kartarpur off-Ravi, a town early in 16th century founded by him. Here, he set up a human laboratory to practise the new faith, the Sikh Panth, to give a practical shape to his over two decades of teachings. It was not based on synthesis of Hinduism and Islam. Neither was it a culmination of Sufi movement of the Muslims, nor of the Bhakti movement of the Hindus. Both of these stressed renunciation of the world, and reflected a broad spectrum of cynicism, pessimism and escapism of a morally sick society. All these had no impact on Guru Nanak. He reflected a positive and healthy attitude towards life. The *Dharamsal* (the place of religious congregation) he constructed, constituted the nerve centre of Sikhism in action.

Here was Guru Nanak, tilling his land, living with his wife and sons, preaching the name of God and his philosophy, a positive reaffirmation of equality of all human beings and their right to a dignified life, free from religious coercion, social bondage and political oppression. He was setting a new trail of religion. A widely travelled householder, he had emerged as a prophet having a group of devotees closely following his teachings, apart from the considerable following all over the subcontinent and beyond.

Guru Nanak laid down strict ethical tests for his disciples. He emphasised that though, "Truth is higher than everything, higher still is truthful living."[28] As such, he laid down guidelines, of a series of cardinal virtues as essentials for the religious discipline of a Sikh. Dr. Trilochan Singh sums these up as follows:

1. *sat*, *santokh*, *vicar;* truth, contentment and reflection;
2. *daya*, *dharam*, *dan;* compassion, righteousness and charity;
3. *sidak*, *sabar*, *sanjam:* faith, tolerance and restraint;
4. *khima*, *garibi*, *seva:* forgiveness, humility and service;
5. love, knowledge (*gyan*) and work (*krit*).[29]

These influenced a devotee's spiritual and temporal affairs. There was no place for immoral conduct or evil propensities in one's living.

In short, *nam japo*, *kirat karo*, *wand chhako*- to meditate True Name with understanding, to earn through honest and creative work, and share earnings with others, became the hallmark of the new society. What rightfully belonged to others was likened to swine for the Muslim and kine for the Hindu i.e. morally degrading. Living on alms was positively looked down upon.

Recitation of *Japji* in the morning, *sodar* at sunset and *sohila* at night became the regular features of the congregation. *Japji* incidentally sums up the entire gamut of Sikh philosophy. Singing of *shabad* (word) which is synonym with *naam* (Name), and Guru Nanak's discourses widened the horizon of devotees and inculcated in them the faculty of discernment and perception.

This was especially so as Guru Nanak preached in the language of the people, Punjabi, which had its own Gurmukhi script[30]. Guru Nanak perfected the script with acrophils, and laid down the rules of grammar closely following these of Prakrit. The texture of Guru Nanak's hymns in multiple Ragas and containing deep philosophical precepts in pithy language, also points to his perfect control over the language, both written and spoken.

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Guru Nanak also instituted the concept of *sangat* and *pangat*. *Sangat*, or congregation, was the mixing together of devotees in worship - recitation of hymns and singing of *shabad*, and listening to discourses. The *sangats* were established all over the places visited by Guru Nanak right from the beginning, and eventually emerged as missionary centres of Sikhism. That infused a social spirit and formed an attempt at communal living apart from group *moksha*, (deliverance from birth and death) instead of emphasis on individualism and individual *moksha* in Hinduism. It also provided the people a platform to exchange views on common problems, and generate a feeling of communal and national consciousness at a time when sense of nationalism was absent among the populace.

Guru Nanak's instituting the *langar*, common kitchen, and *pangat*, sitting together in a row by all the devotees irrespective of caste, creed or sex, was revolutionary in seeking to mitigate the prevalent taboos. The devotees were inculcated to sing, "O sire, I am not high, neither low, nor middling. I am God's devotee and seek His protection."[31] They were asked to rise above narrow sectarianism. Bhai Gurdas tells us that the devout Sikhs of Guru Nanak included persons - men and women - of all classes, including *sudras* and outcastes.

The congregation at Kartarpur was convinced of its relevance to the contemporary world. It was aware of its minority character, but it had a perception of ideal living. All the more so, as the disciples had an incontrovertible faith in Guru Nanak's spiritual paramountcy. They constituted a distinct socio-religious and proselytising group.

Guru Nanak's greatest contribution for consolidation of his mission was appointment of a successor to carry on his work to its fruition. And, the successor(s) was moulded in the image of Guru Nanak himself to faithfully carry on the master's work. After strict tests, eventually two men were shortlisted - Bhai Lehna and Baba Buddha. Bhai Lehna was eventually chosen not because he was a Khatri in preference to Baba Buddha a Jat, as some motivated denigrators, *nindaks*, in the last few years would imply.[32] According to contemporary Sikh traditions, Guru Nanak kindled his own light into that of Lehna who became *Angad*, the part of Guru's body. Guru Nanak's sons were ignored as they were found wanting.

In short, Guru Nanak had dilated on almost all aspects of human endeavours in religious, social and political spheres. The use of political terminology, of Guru Nanak's establishing *raj* and Bhai Lehna's patrimony of sword, power and, heroism in the context of his succession by Bhai Balwand, in what is known as ballad of succession in *Adi Granth* (Ramkali di Var), was indicative of the Sikh movement's providing overall leadership to the society.[33] It was this concept of an admixture of *raj* and *jog* that pointed to *miri* and *piri* under Guru Hargobind and eventually led to the emergence of the Khalsa - a perfect saint-soldier. It was reserved for his successors to build upon that foundation. And they did it without deviation.

In nominating Bhai Lehna (b. March 1504), Guru Nanak was not unaware that he was separating the personality of the Guru from that of his light. In order to avoid a possible conflict with his sons,[34] Guru Nanak wanted Guru Angad to settle in Khadur where the latter's wife and children lived. He thus separated the institution of Guru from the family and its location.

Guru Angad was spiritual successor of Guru Nanak, and completely identified himself with the founder-Guru as part and parcel of his ideology. His importance lay in the fact that he reemphasised in totality Guru Nanak's mission. Guru Nanak had dwelt on multiple strands. Guru Angad did not fall into the trap of over-emphasising some aspects and under-emphasising others.

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He squarely met the threat posed by Baba Sri Chand, eldest son of Guru Nanak who founded -the sect of Udasis - imbued in deep ascetic traditions of the Hindu social order. That caused first schism in the followers of Guru Nanak, though of minor order. Guru Angad coined the term *manmukh* - self-centred or ego-oriented - for such persons.[35] He steered Sikhism clear from asceticism by reiterating Guru Nanak's message in down to earth manner. According to Prof Teja Singh, Guru Angad did vigorous preaching and at his behest as many as 131 *sangats* were established.

Guru Angad had the hard task to shape up the followers on correct lines and prevent deviation. In parenthesis, it seems a simple task. It was not. The spiritual side was taken care of by keeping the daily chore, of *sangat* and *pangat* at Khadur, of recitation and singing of *shabad* (hymns), Guru's discourses, and *langar*. He introduced physical well-being of the community by ordaining a wrestling ground including sports for children which incidentally was a small step towards an admixture of *bhakti* and *shakti*, in the process inculcating martial spirit.

Guru Angad greatly propagated the use of Gurmukhi alphabets in his drive for literacy among his followers. Copies of Guru Nanak's hymns were made for distribution to various centres. Guru Nanak's biography (*Janamsakhi*) was also prepared to serve as a guideline for the Sikhs.[36]

Guru Angad after 12 ½ years (September 1539-March 1552) found that his end was drawing near. He chose his devout disciple Amar Das (b. April 1509) who had a rigorous training for 12 years to succeed him. He was also told to hold his congregation at Goindwal, (newly established by the Guru with assistance of Amar Das in 1546), away from Khadur to avoid conflict with Guru Angad's sons who were not found up to the mark.

Guru Angad performed the herculean task of strictly following the tenets of the founding-Guru and laid down the guidelines for his successors.

The period of Guru Amar Das (March 1552-August 1574) was quite eventful in further development of Sikhism. He was a zealous preacher, an able organiser and an untiring social reformer. Above all, he was a great exponent of Guru Nanak's philosophy. In the words of Kalsahar, the leader of *Bhatts* (minstrels). Guru Amar Das was essentially devoted to *naam*, which brought him spiritual illumination and realisation, as it had done so to several *rishis* and *bhaktas*. He was a worthy successor to Guru Nanak and Guru Angad.

The accession of a humble Sikh provoked diverse elements to try to overwhelm the Sikh movement.

Guru Angad's son Datu was resentful at his being bypassed. Baba Sri Chand contended that Guru Angad, a nominee of Guru Nanak had no right to pass on the succession and for the last time made an attempt, a feeble one, to claim it for himself. The Sikh movement had so much bypassed the *udasis* that Guru Amar Das was able to put a final seal of separation of the two.

Then there were Brahmins and other high caste Hindus, the privileged ones within the caste hierarchy, who started not only indulging in open criticism of Sikhism but also lodged complaints against it with the government of the day. This marked the upper caste Hindu's initiating the long lasting policy, valid even today, of their seeking the intervention of the provincial and central governments to contain, if not annihilate, Sikhism. *The yogis* since their debate with Guru Nanak at Achal Batala had been fast losing their ground in the Punjab and were on their way out.

Shortly after his accession. Guru Amar Das left for religious preaching "to instruct and emancipate the people at large" which took him to Kurukshetra, and Haridwar. The solar eclipse of *Abijit Nakshatra*, January 14, 1553, (it recurs after about 19 years)[37] which had earlier taken Guru Nanak to Kurukshetra, known as a big centre for pilgrimage on such an occasion, now brought Guru Amar Das and his Sikhs to Kurukshetra for preaching Guru Nanak's mission to the vast multitude. It led to discussions with *yogis*, naked ascetics, *sanyasis* and the followers of all the six schools of Hindus philosophy.[38]

In the words of Bhai Santokh Singh, one such discussion centred around the question, "Why has Guru Nanak preached a new gospel when already there exist several Puranas and Vedas, and the seeker can obtain all they wish from them. "Guru Amar Das cogently replied, "When rain falls on the earth, is there no water on earth?"[39] He elaborated that "The teachings of the Vedas and Puranas are accessible only to the few of higher castes and to those who engage in study for a long time. They are just like the water in a well. A well is dug with great difficulty and when it is complete it can serve only a small number. The Word of Guru is like the rain. It drops from the heaven alike on the high and the low. In spite of the wells, people want rain. So, God has sent the Guru, whose word is intelligible to the masses and within the reach of all", while Vedas and Puranas were not.[40]

Guru Ram Das records that when Guru Amar Das reached Jumna and the Ganges, the toll-gatherers offered presents and the whole multitude crossed over the two rivers without paying a farthing as pilgrims' tax, as they avowed their fealty to Guru Amar Das. The toll gatherers knew very well that Guru Amar Das and his followers were not Hindus who were subject to payment of *Jazia*, or toll tax. The people of Haridwar came in a body and craved shelter of the Guru. Daily there was *Kirtan*, singing of hymns, and people learnt of devotion to God through the teachings of the Guru.[41]

This visit to Hindu places of worship added to the stature of Guru Amar Das, and his influence was on the rise. This made the Brahmins (and upper caste Hindus) all the more determined to seek the provincial and central government's intervention to safeguard the Hindu *dharma*. Their complaint to Emperor Akbar who was at Lahore in 1566-67 is of interest. It reads: "Thy Majesty is the protector of our customs and the redressor of our wrongs. Every man's religion is dear to him. Guru Amar Das of Goindwal has abandoned the religious and social customs of the Hindus and abolished the distinction of the four castes. Such heterodoxy hath never before been heard of in the four ages. There is now no twilight prayer, no *gayatri*, no offering of water to ancestors, no pilgrimages, no obsequies and no worship of idols or of the divine *Saligram*. The Guru hath abandoned all these and established the repetition of *Waheguru* instead of Ram, and no one now acteth according to the Vedas or the Smritis. The Guru reverenceth not *Yogis*, *Jatis* or Brahmins. He worshippeth no gods or goddesses, and he ordereth his Sikhs to refrain from doing so for ever more. He seateth all his followers in a line and causeth them to eat together from his kitchen, irrespective of caste -whether they are Jats, strolling minstrels, Muhammadans, Brahmins, Khatris, shopkeepers, sweepers, barbers, washermen, fishermen, or carpenters. We pray thee, restrain him now, else it will be difficult hereafter.[42]

At Akbar's behest, Guru Amar Das instead of going himself sent Bhai Jetha (later known as Guru Ram Das) whose answers were found convincing to a liberal-minded Akbar, who felt that

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whereas the Sikh movement represented the spirit of humanim, the Hindus were only following the letter of their scriptures.

Pertinently, Bhai Jetha expounded the basics of Sikhism when he said, "Birth and caste are of no avail before God. It is deeds which make or unmake a man. To exploit ignorant people with superstitions and to call it religion is a sacrilege against God and man. To worship the infinite, formless and absolute God in the form of totem, an image or an insignificant or time-bound object of nature, or to wash one's sins not through compassion and self-surrender, but through ablutions; to insist upon special diets, languages and dresses, and fads about what to eat and what not, and to condemn the mass of human beings, including women, to the status of sub-humans and to deny them the reading of scriptures and even work of every kind is to tear man from man. This is not religion, nor it is religion to deny the world through which alone man can find his spiritual possibilities."[43]

Akbar was so impressed that he not only dismissed the complaint but called upon the high caste Hindu delegation to ask for forgiveness.[44] However, some of the Guru's followers could not make up their mind to abandon their previous religion, and under influence of high caste Hindus reneged Sikhism. Guru Amar Das introduced for them the word *be-mukh*, one who had turned away from the Guru. He also condemned the traducers - hostile to the saints and friendly to the wicked - who "will never find comfort in this world or the next."[45] As the Guru's influence grew, the jealously of high caste Hindus became intense.

Later (in 1571) when Akbar was visiting various religious divines, he visited Guru Amar Das at Goindwal. By the time. Guru Amar Das had made it compulsory for anyone who wanted to call on him at first to take food in *Guru ka Langar*. Akbar partook the food and at Guru's instance remitted the land revenue of the hard pressed peasantry. This endeared Guru to the masses, and dampened the spirit of Brahmins and high caste Hindus.

By the time of his accession, the institutions of *kirtan*, *sangat*, and *pangat* had taken firm roots. Guru Amar Das took decisive steps to further consolidate the Sikh movement.

1. To emancipate the Sikhs from following the empty rituals, he simplified for his followers the ceremonies for births, deaths, marriages and other occasions. It freed the Sikhs from sectarian services of Brahmins.
2. He further improved the quality of food served in *Guru ka Langar* which new included choicest food and dainty dishes (though he himself partook only saltless rice, lentils and curd). He also made partaking of food in *Guru Ka Langar* compulsory for anyone wishing to see him. This applied even to emperor Akbar and upper caste Rajput Raja of Haripur during their visit. The food was prepared by people of all castes; that was to weld his followers in one human family.
3. To administer to the needs of the growing community, he established 22 *Manjis*, dioceses or preaching districts, with a responsible position conferred upon its head to administer *charanpahul* (baptism) and admit new people within the Sikh fold. One Muslim Allah Yar and some women too occupied this position of responsibility. The *manjis* covered areas from Kabul in Afghanistan to Bengal.[46] Then there were 52 *Pirhas*, smaller centres under *manjis*, to cater to local congregations.

4. To know each other and develop fellow feelings among the community, a) he fixed Bisova Divas, i.e. first day of month of Baisakh for an annual get together of Sikhs all over at Guru's place. He later added *divali* for annual get together, making it biannual. Baisakhi and diwali were selected because these were well-known events to the people who did not keep calenders, b) To cater to the growing need for drinking water and bathing, he got constructed a *Baoli*, a large oblong well, in 1556, together with covered chambers at Goindwal. Because of low level of water, it needed 84 steps, a mystic symbolic number, to reach the water.[47] Bathing of the people of different castes in the same *Baoli* helped to create a feeling of oneness and shedding of caste prejudices.
5. He went in for social reform in a major way: a) He was the first social reformer to condemn the practice of *sati* (widow-burning). He advocated widow remarriage, removal of *purdah* (veil) and equal treatment to women (as in his appointment to head Manjis). b) He re-emphasised the irrelevance of caste system, and advocated inter-caste marriages among his followers. He recognised the spiritual achievements of Nam Dev the Calico-printer, and Kabir the weaver, whose hymns were being sung by the masses.[48] That was also -indicative of outcastes becoming his followers in increasing numbers.
6. He got prepared authentic *pothis* (volumes) of hymns of his predecessors as well as his own and some Bhaktas to prevent possible interpolation. He declared that sight of Guru was not sufficient for one's liberation: it lay in contemplation over *shabad*, word, as Guru.[49]
7. He actively preached prohibition and encouraged economically beneficial trades and crafts.

Guru Amar Das produced in his followers a feeling of brotherhood. *Bhai re*, O Brother, was a specific form of address in his hymns. He inculcated a spirit of fearlessness in his devotees who rose from distinctions between 'inferiors' and 'superiors'. He re-emphasised God as *asur sanghar*, destroyer of the wicked.[50] The earthly 'kings' were unreal - those who fought for temporal gains and died to go into the cycle of birth and death. As against that, God had shown his grace to his saints. The Sikh who put himself under discipline for regeneration, could very well qualify to rule the world.[51] Verily, "the Sikh spirit was already spilling into the realm of politics", and the mass awakening was changing the social parameters of power.[52]

Guru Amar Das composed hymns of vivid spiritual insight. His *anand*. Song of Bliss, was a grand exposition of *gurmat sahaj marg*. Guru's path of equipoise, and masterpiece of unbounden joy at finding the True Guru. He imbued the *sangat* of this feeling of eternal light and cosmic music of the formless creator. He gave the community a feeling of being a distinct entity.

Under Guru Amar Das, Sikhism made rapid strides. It was well on the way to becoming a universal community, with institution of Guruship greatly strengthened.

A reference may be made here to *sadd*, Call, recorded by Sunder recounting Guru Amar Das's last moments. When he found his end near, Guru Amar Das called his disciples and members of his family. This composition, in parts, is in question and answer form. Ignoring that, many well-known Sikh scholars fall into the trap of mistranslating part of the composition. Guru Amar Das ordained that when he was gone, the people should sing God's praises without a break. At that stage, a question was asked: "Should we call Pandit Kesho Gopal to read old scriptures that discourse on Hari?" His answer was "Read discourses on Hari, listen to the name of Hari, I should be carried in the bier of God's love". Similarly, Guru Amar Das commended that, "Let his last rites consist of *nam* (Name) alone."[53]

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Guru Amar Das bypassed his sons, Mohan and Mohari, and chose instead his son-in-law Bhai Jetha (who had been subjected to severe tests) and now named Guru Ram Das (b. Oct 1530) to succeed him. Mohari accepted the choice and bowed to Guru Ram Das, while Mohan was resentful, though later he too was reconciled.

The era of Guru Ram Das (August 1574-September 1581) saw an all-round development of the Sikh movement. That was notwithstanding the hostility of high caste Hindus who sometimes marshalled the support of local officials.

Guru Ram Das was a poetic genius. He was a master composer, and introduced a number of new *Ragas*, meters. His lyricism touched the heart, and had an ecstatic effect, virtually hypnotising the listeners. It also indicated an increase in the congregation.

He prudently codified the daily code of conduct and worship for a Sikh devotee.[54] That was precursor for *rahit maryada* (code of conduct). His composing the verses to solemnise the wedding ceremony was a logical corollary to the work of his predecessor to snap the Sikh connection with the corresponding Hindu ceremony.[55]

Guru Ram Das introduced several new terms, signifying a widened horizon. He was the first to call Guru Nanak the *Jagat Guru* (Suhi M. 4, 9(1), *A. G.* 733), a term so effectively used by Bhai Gurdas. He used the word *gurbani* in its modern sense for the first time. He was the first to use the word 'the people' (Asa Chhant M. 4, 3(4), *A. G.*, 445) in Punjabi language, and that too for *gursikhs* which indicated the broad acceptance of Sikhism in the masses. The recurrence of the word *gursikh* which overtook the word *gurmukh* in his hymns is also to be seen in that light.[56]

Guru Ramdas was not unaware of the hostility of orthodox Hindus whom he had so successfully faced before Akbar in 1566-67. Some of these Hindus carried tales about the growing influence of the Sikh movement to local *divan*, *taluqdar*, *khan*, noble, *Shiqdar* - who otherwise could be envious of the Guru's wealth and influence.[57] But Akbar's benign attitude was a restraining factor.

Guru Ram Das condemned *manmukh* and *nindak* (those who follow their own erratic mind, and detractors) as enemies of men of God."To counter the havoc caused by the Handalis, also called Niranjanias, followers of Baba Handal, once heading a *manji* under Guru Amar Das, in tampering with the invocation, *mul mantra &c.* Guru Ram Das circulated authenticated copies of Japji and other compositions to the. congregations.[59] The question of preventing adultrationofthe Guru's hymns was added to the agenda of the Sikh movement. Prof Puran Singh mentions Guru Ram Das's desire to avoid confrontation with the hostile elements as one of the reasons for his setting up Ramdaspur. However, it would be far fetched to agree with Surjit Hans that the martyrdom of "the Sikh Guru was in the air" during this period.

According to District Gazetteer Amritsar (1883-84), Guru Ram Das obtained grant of the site for Chak Guru, or Ramdaspur from Emperor Akbar in 1577, on payment of Rs. 700 Akbari to the Zamindar ofTung who owned the land. In selecting the site. Guru Ram Das must have been moved by the consideration that the site was away from the Grand Trunk Road, but not far from it. It was away from the glaze of officials. Guru Ram Das moved over to the new site and started construction work immediately. It led to the foundation of Chak Guru or Ramdaspur and Ram Das Sarovar (Amritsar). This needed a lot of financial resources and increased participation of *sangat* in *kar seva*, voluntary labour.

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The people responded to the Guru's call in good measure. Guru Ram Das introduced the system of *Masands* - derivative from Masnad-i-Ali (His Excellency, for provincial Governors) to collect funds from his followers. The overwhelming response led to a rise in status of *sangat*, and of esteem for the status for women who contributed to a large measure to the voluntary labour force. [60]

The Sikhs belonged to all strata of society - ranging from wealthy traders through petty shopkeepers, small state functionaries, artisans, tailors, shoe makers, peasants, untraditional Brahmins to labourers[61] The urban poor and rural toilers joined the Sikh faith in large numbers. The Sikh movement by now, was cutting across the caste lines in a big way. "Ravidas, a cobbler, by singing Lord's praises, raised himself from being outcaste to a high position: people of all the four castes bowed at his feet. And, God turned his back to Khatris and Brahmins, and accepted Namdev as his own."[62] Under Guru's instructions the common man understood the primacy and effectiveness of Lord's name in human affairs, and as an effective instrument for upword social mobility. The people were drawn to the mainstream of society through Guru's teachings.

A positive development was Baba Sri Chand's making up with Guru Ram Das on Sikh terms, and accepting the primacy of Guru Nanak's mission and exposition of his successors.[63] This rapprochement placed Udasis in favourable light.

Because of the construction work. Guru Ram Das had a large establishment and a greater inflow of money. That was being managed by his eldest son, Prithi Chand, who got enmeshed in materialism and wanted to have more of it. The Guru's second son, Mahadev, was more of a recluse. Therefore when the time came, the choice of Guru Ram Das fell on his youngest son, Arjan Dev (b. April 1553), who was truly imbued with *nam* and ideology of Guru Nanak.

That infuriated Prithi Chand, who lost balance and started speaking bitterly against his father. He also threatened to seize guruship by force. Guru Ram Das's counsel not to quarrel with him, stop machinations and not stand as a rival to Guru Arjan who richly deserved the honour, fell on deaf ears.[64] He was explicit that right from the beginning of Guru Nanak's lineage, the four successions including the one he had just made, no one had acquired it through wile; it went only to those who had served with devotion.[65] This had no impact on Prithi Chand.

The era of Guru Arjan Dev (September 15 81-May 1606) was marked by a rare liveliness, vitality and high spirit in the realm of Sikhism. He was an exceptional genius. He belonged to the new generation, born after the passing away of Guru Nanak.[66] Sikhism during his period made rapid strides to come into notice as a powerful third force, independent of both Hinduism and Islam. Above all, he raised the level of Guru to that of *sachcha padshah* (true king)[67] as against the worldly kings whose position was ephemeral.[68]

The achievements of Guru Arjan are to be viewed in the context of the fierce resistance he met from within the family - his elder brother Prithi Chand who externalised the conflict and sought assistance of the hostile elements to contain the growing influence of Sikhism. But it had little impact, if at all, on Guru Arjan who remained calm and composed till the very last.

Guru Arjan tried to defuse the crisis *enfamille*. He transferred all the property of his father to Prithi Chand who was not appeased. Prithi Chand at the moment was being instigated by high caste Hindus who already were on the lookout to contain the Sikh movement. Assisted by a wily Brahmin, Mahesh Das alias Bir Bal, one of the nine gems ofAkbar's Court, the detractors tried to fish in the troubled waters. At Bir Bal's instance, the district revenue official, Sulhi Khan, too aligned himself with the detractors.

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With the help of some misguided *masands*, Prithi Chand started preaching that he had been invested with the Guruship and not Arjan Dev. He was able to mislead some simple-minded Sikhs. The state of his meanness could be judged from the fact that he would collect their offerings and direct them to the *langar* of Guru Arjan to take their meals. That rather contributed to his undoing.

The efforts of Bhai Gurdas who, by now, was back from Agra to persuade Prithi Chand to adopt the path of sanity fell through. Bhai Gurdas in disgust gave him and his collaborators the plural epithet of *mine*, deceitful or highway rubbers, which stuck to the clique. The leading Sikhs successfully combatted misleading propaganda of Prithi Chand, who otherwise met series of setbacks.

Prithi Chand with the assistance of detractors prepared a Memoradum (*mahjar*) levelling charges against Guru Arjan and presented it to Emperor Akbar who treated it with the contempt it deserved.[69] The wily Bir Bal was killed in 1586 when on a campaign against Pathans in the Frontier. Sulhi Khan marshalled his resources to attack Guru Arjan but, on the way at Haher whereto he reverted to confer with Prithi Chand, met unholy death when his horse along with him jumped into a brick-oven.[70]

Guru Arjan was least distracted by these goings on. Right from the beginning, he concentrated on the missionary tours and the construction work, which went hand in hand.

Ramdas Sarovar shortly afterwards renamed *Amritsar*, the pool of nectar, *Santokhsar* and *Guru keMahal* (Guru's residence) all left midway by Guru Ram Das were completed around 1588. The foundation of Harimandar now also known as Golden Temple, was laid on *Maghi*, Sunday December28, 1588, - the foundation stone being laid by the renowned Sufi Saint ofQadiry Order, Mir Mohamed Khan known as Hazrat Mian Mir of Lahore.[71] Harimandir unlike Hindu and Muslim places of worship was built at a lower level than the surrounding area. It had doors on all the four sides, signifying both humanity and universalism and that it was open to people of all the denominations.[72]

Side by side, during his extensive missionary tours of *Majha* and *Doaba*, Guru Arjan founded the towns of Sri Gobindpur on Beas, Tarn Taran, Kartarpur apart from the city of Amritsar for which he invited people of all trades and professions. The religious centres established at these places became centres for consolidation of the Guru's following. Tarn Taran had the privilege of having the biggest *sarovar*, tank, and emerged as the centre for cure of leprosy victims. The Lt. Governor of Jalandhar Doab, Syed Azim Khan, who became Guru Arjan's disciple, played a leading role in establishment of Sikh centre at Kartarpur.

Guru Arjan also got dug a *Baoli* at Dabbi Bazar Lahore, (it was paid for by Wazir Khan, Governor of Lahore), a couple of wells at Tarn Taran, Gangsar well at Kartarpur which had as pure water as that of Ganges, a huge well with six wheels at Chhaharta near Amritsar and another well with three wheels at Amritsar. He also laid *Guru ka Bagh* apart from some other constructions like *Ramsar* at Amritsar. Guru Arjan's missionary tours were a great success in attracting disciples, cutting across religious lines. These included hill Rajas of Kulu, Saket, Haripur and Chamba who visited him at various times. The Malwa was aptly covered by Masands.

The widespread building activity was indicative of sharp increase in the number of Sikhs, who according to Mohsin Fani of *Dabistan-i-Mazhaib* were found in all parts of Hindustan and beyond. It also invited a reorganisation of Masand system to channelise the funds for construction work. With the consent of the Sikhs, *daswand*, i.e. one-tenth of their earnings was fixed. It was carried by *Masands* to the Guru on Baisakhi day. He also encouraged the Sikhs to enter into trade activity, especially those of Turki horses, and also probably himself entered that trade. It made the Sikhs to have trade encounters with tough Pathans of the trans-frontier region, Afghanistan and beyond. It enriched them and also the Guru's treasury. Besides, the hazards of horse trading made them some of the finest horsemen of Asia.

That was not an incidental development. His son Hargobind born on 21 *Asarh*, June 18, 1590, as part of his education got thorough training in horse riding, swordsmanship and warfare at the hands ofBaba Buddha. Guru Arjan could foresee the need for the new orientation in view of the persistent hostility of' local muqaddams and faujdars on their own, and at the instigation of Prithia and malignant upper caste Hindus. They were hand in glove with one another.

Guru Arjan's perception of the times to come was not withstanding Akbar's high regards for him. According to the Court historian, Abul Fazal's *Akbar Namah*, Guru Arjan accorded a profuse reception to Akbar on November 24, 1598, at Goindwal. Akbar was really impressed by Guru Arjan's "bewitching and handsome appearance, sweet and melodious voice and fascinating and charming manners, his princely style of living, his warm reception and his singing of hymns" in praise of God.[73] At Guru Arjan's instance, Akbar issued orders to remit the revenue by one-sixth.

It may be mentioned that Guru Arjan was a great lyricist. His hymns had a rare quality to touch the symphony of one's heart. He mostly composed short hymns in simple language of the people. These straightaway affected the emotions of the singer and the listener. His *Sukhmani*, psalm of peace, still remains a masterpiece to put at ease a disturbed mind and provide it instant solace. Guru Arjan's *bani*, hymns, captivated the heart of the people and proved an effective instrument in spreading the Sikh panth.

By the time, Prithia's attempt to compose his own hymns in the name of Guru Nanak posed a threat to corrupt the Sikh philosophy. The compilation of *Guru Granth* had already been on the agenda of the Sikh panth. Guru Nanak had passed on the collection of his hymns to Guru Angad who had them copied and widely distributed. Guru Nanak had also collected Farid's composition. Guru Angad enlarged the collection by adding those of some more Bhaktas. Later, Guru Amar Das had collected the hymns of his predecessors and his own as also of a number of Bhaktas, into *pothis*, volumes.

Guru Arjan, shortly after Akbar's visit, early in 1599, began the project of compilation of *Adi Granth*.[74] Bhai Gurdas was appointed amaneuses. Guru Arjan took five years to complete the project. *Adi Granth* was ready in 1604 when it was installed in the Harimandir with Baba Buddha as the first granthi.[75] It was placed at a high pedestal while Guru Arjan himself sat at a lower level to emphasise that *shabad*. Word, is the Guru. It was embodiment of the Guru himself.

The compilation of Adi Granth was a major achievement of Guru Arjan.

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Guru Arjan like his predecessors was a connoisseur in music and put it to good use in organising the *Adi Granth* including the hymns of bards and Bhaktas in various *ragas*, musical meters.

He also exercised great caution in selection of hymns of Bhaktas for inclusion. He rejected compositions like Pran Sangli obtained after considerable effort from Ceylon, being spurious. His ideological parameters were clear.

The *Adi Granth* enunciated unadultrated monotheism and humanism. It reflected pan-Hindustani and beyond, matter of fact, existence of Sikhism.

The death of Emperor Akbar in October 1605 marked a sea change in the policy of his successor. Prince Salim alias Nuruddin Jahangir, who out of political necessity was forced to uphold Islamic puritanism of Naqashbandi revivalists led by Khwaja Mohammad Baqi-Billa (1564-1603) of Turan.[76]

Shaikh Farid Bukhari, one of his followers had emerged as a strong force in Akbar's Court by the end of the latter's reign, while the spiritual mantle fell on Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi also known as Mujadid Alif-i-Sani (1561-1624).

After Salim's revolt, and Akbar's forgiving his errant son and proclaiming him heir-apparent, the leading nobles of Akbar's Court were divided into two factions. One, favouring Akbar's policy of *Din-i-Ilahi* and *Sulha-i-Kul* (Peace for All), favoured liberal minded Prince Khusrau, Salim's son, and held Salim unsuitable for kingship. The other, of Islamic fundamentalists, sick of Akbar's policy of religious tolerance, aligned with Salim and extracted promises to reverse Akbar's religious policy and further the cause of Islam at the cost of the non-Muslims.[77] They were to be humiliated and shown no quarters. Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi's letters, *Maktubat-i-Emam-i-Rabani*, fully reflect his philosophy of contempt for the non-Muslims.

In Punjab, the Hindu position was listless except that they would hobnob with the convenient officials against the growing Sikh influence.

Guru Arjan's high profile, active missionary preachings, and pan-Hindustani aspirations rankled in the mind of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi who in one of his letters described Guru Arjan Dev as Chief of Infidels - *Rais-i-ahl-i-Shirk* - and a leader of the *Kafirs* - *imam-i-kufr*.[78] Gokal Chand Narang describes Guru Arjan Dev as "the first great organiser of the Sikh nation."[79] In the words of Mohsin Fani, the Sikhs had by now "become accustomed to a form of self government within the Empire."

Khusrau's indiscreet revolt against his father on April 6, 1606, and his hurrying to the Punjab on way to the North-West Frontier to gain adherents greatly helped to strengthen the position of Islamic revivalists. Khusrau was pursued by Shaikh Farid Bukhari who in turn was being followed by Jahangir. The persons who directly or indirectly helped Khusrau were immediately punished.

Khusrau crossed river Beas and was followed by Shaikh Farid Bukhari who inflicted on him a crushing defeat near Bhairowal. Khusrau was captured on April 27, 1606, near Chenab and brought as prisoner to Lahore.

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Jahangir crossed to Beas on April 26, and was encamped at Jhabal. Upto May 22 i.e. for 27 days, there was no mention at all of Khusrau's calling oh Guru Arjan much less the latter's blessing him.

Around May 23, a report about Guru Arjan's blessing Khusrau and affixing a saffron mark on his forehead poured into Jahangir's ears. That made him to call for Guru Arjan into his presence.

That sets the stage for Jahangir's entry in his memoirs, *Tuzak-i-Jahangiri*, which reads: "There lived at Goindwal on the bank of the river Biah (Beas) a Hindu named Arjun in the garb of a *Pir* and Shaikh, so much so that he had by his ways and means captivated the hearts of many simple-minded Hindus, nay, even of foolish and stupid Muslims and he had noised himself as a religious and wordly leader. They called him Guru, and from all directions, fools and fool-worshippers were attracted towards him and expressed full faith in him. For three or four generations they had kept this shop warm. For a long time the thought had been presenting itself to me that either I should put an end to this false traffic or he should be brought into the fold of Islam.

"At last during the days when Khusrau passed along this road, this insignificant fellow made up his mind to see him and conveyed preconceived things to him and made on his forehead a fingermark in saffron which in Hindu terminology is called qashqa (*teeka*} and is considered propitious. When this came to the ears of our Majesty, and I fully knew his heresies, I ordered that he should be brought into my presence and, having handed over his houses, dwelling place, and children to Murtza Khan (Shaikh Farid Bukhari) and having confiscated his property, I ordered that he should be put to death with tortures."[80]

The first part about popularity of Guru Arjan and his mission was correct. The second part about Guru Arjan's blessing Khusrau was a pure concoction,[81] probably the work of Shaikh Farid Bukhari who might have used Chandu as a tool. As Ganda Singh points out, "Never in the whole history of the Sikh Gurus, there has been any occasion for any Guru to anoint anyone, Sikh or non-Sikh, with a *teeka*. Even the succeeding Guru was never *teeka*'d by any Guru himself. The *teeka* or *tilak* ceremony of the succeeding Guru was always performed by a leading Sikh. In the case of Gurus Angad to Hargobind, the ceremony was performed by Bhai Buddha, a venerable old Sikh coming from the days of Guru Nanak. And the same practice was followed upto the time of Gum Gobind Singh, tenth and last Guru."[82]

From the details in *Tuzuk-i-Jehangiri*, it is obvious that Jahangir was looking for an opportunity to fix Guru Arjan. He left the details of punishment to be worked out by Shaikh Farid Bukhari on whom he had conferred the high title of Murtaza Khan - one who had gained the royal pleasure. *Tuzuk* does not mention of any fine being imposed on Guru Arjan, as has been mentioned by some contemporary sources like *Dabisan-i-Mazhaib* and *Jesuits*. That seems to be the result of a mix up.[83]

Guru Arjan nominated Hargobind as his successor and left for Lahore. He was subjected to a number of tortures. The Sikh traditional accounts mention that Guru Arjan was made to sit on hot iron plate, hot sand was thrown over his body, and he was boiled in a cauldron. *Dabistan-i-Mazhaib* mentions of his being deprived of food and water and put into the hot blazing sand and stoned which caused blood to ooze out of his head. He was tortured for 3 to 5 days.

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With wounds blistering on his body, on May 30, 1606, tied hand and feet, he was thrown into river Ravi wherein he disappeared.[84] In the words of Bhai Gurdas, Guru Arjan though in great pain on the night of May 29-30, was fully composed, with hymns in praise of God on his lips.

Guru Arjan's martyrdom, the first of its kind in the history of Hindustan, the sub-continent, caused great resentment and indignation among the general body of Hindus and Muslims, apart from the Sikhs. One tends to agree with Ganda Singh that "much of the Chandu-story was given currency to in those very days to shift the responsibility of tortures inflicted on the Guru from the Mughal officials to the *Kafirs*.[85] Chandu was only a minor official at Lahore, and hostile to the Sikh Panth.

The non-implementation of Jahangir's orders about taking over of Guru Arjan's property and children remains inexplicable, notwithstanding Sikh traditional accounts about intervention of Mian Mir who at that stage had no influence either with the Emperor or Shaikh Farid Bukhari, the main actors in Guru Arjan's martyrdom.

Immediately after the news of Guru Arjan's martyrdom, Hargobind was anointed by Bhai Buddha who had the rare privilege of anointing the first five successors of Guru Nanak. The normal ceremony consisted of tying a turban and offering him a *seli*, a wollen cord worn as a necklace or hoisted around the head of the Guru. In accordance with the departing wishes of his father and the changed circumstances, Guru Hargobind chose to wear sword belts and turban with a royal aigrette. The wearing of two swords, representing *Miri* and *Piri*, temporal and spiritual sovereignty and aigrettee representing royalty were significant.[86] The ceremony was performed on the mound in front of Harimandir where later Akal Takht was built.

Sikhism henceforth in the words of Guru Hargobind was to lay equal emphasis on development of physical and spiritual faculties. *Tegh* (scimiter) and *Deg* (community kitchen) were to go hand in hand. That was within the framework of Guru Nanak's mission. And, that was Guru Hargobind's instant and spontaneous response to the threat posed by the state tyranny.

Some western scholars, and following them some others have come to emphasise that the change in the Sikh attitude was because of heavy induction of Jats into Sikhism during Guru Arjan's era. That is a downright lie. The Jats and whatever other low caste and outcaste classes, which came within the Guru's fold, did so as true believers and followers. They did not do so to subvert the Guru's mission or hijack it, which these writers would tend to imply. Also, it would amount to questioning the very bonafides of earlier Sikhs, and the capacity of the Gurus to provide them the necessary leadership.

Guru Hargobind was not straightaway itching for a fight. He had to build up his strength. To begin with, discretion was considered the better part of the valour. Guru Hargobind under the advice of leading Sikhs chose to move over to the thickly forested and ill-connected Malwa tract. *Bhat Vehi Multani-Sindhi* tells us that Guru Hargobind accompanied by his mother Ganga and wife Damodari arrived in village Daroli in Pargana Dagru (near Moga in Ferozepur District) at the house ofBhai Sain Das on Jeth Sudi 8, Samat 1663 i.e. June 4, 1606.[87] That meant, they must have started from'Amritsar shortly after the investiture ceremony on June 1, 1606. Guru Hargobind stayed at Village Daroli for over a year and a half, i.e. upto end 1607-early 1608 when he came back to Goindwal.[88] Meanwhile, Shaikh Farid Bukhari Murtza Khan had taken over as Governor ofGujarat.

His departure meant closing of the case, whatsoever, against the Guru so far as the Mughal government was concerned.

However, his wife Damodari and mother Ganga must have stayed back as the former gave birth to Baba Gurditta at Daroli on Purnima Asu, Samat 1665 (September 1608).[89]

Guru Hargobind got a well dug at Daroli and held regular *diwan*, congregation, at a site outside the village, where *sangat* from Malwa and beyond also came.[90] He undertook martial exercises and gained perfection in the use of various arms, including sword, bow and arrow, went on game shooting in the dense forest, besides undertaking preaching tours in the adjoining areas. He was the first Guru to visit Malwa. His presence made big dent in the area which followed Sakhi Sarwar. The Sikh movement became a torrent under his successors.

Guru Hargobind on return to Amritsar began in a big way the implementation of his new-look policy. He got full support from Bhai Gurdas who in his compositions dwelt upon the necessity of resort to sword by men of God to check the evil.

The foundation of Akal Takht or Akali Bunga (The Eternal Throne) was laid in 1608 in front of the Harimandir. It was built on a raised platform about 3 meters high. To begin with, the high mound of earth was levelled, and later the ground floor was built. This was his seat of temporal power. Bhai Gurdas was appointed its first Jathedar. Here, Guru Hargobind would watch wrestling bouts and military feats, including the sword fight, of his disciples. He also began to take interest in secular affairs and provided the people quick and cheap justice. He invented *dhad*, an instrument suitable for singing of ballads. And, *dhadis* sang ballads of heroism. He ordained that when he was in Harimandir, he was a saint, while at Akal Takht he was a King.

Soon disciples offered themselves for military training and volunteered to serve as soldiers in return for food and clothes only. Keeping in view the new requirements of militia, he laid the foundations of a fort named Lohgarh in 1609 to house men and horses. Later, a wall around Amritsar came up.

Provisions in men and money came in abundance. He raised saint-soldiers, fully devoted to be in the vanguard to fight against oppression. The Guru maintained a personal bodyguard. The militia was properly organised into a command structure. He and his disciples went on shooting game in the nearby forest, and otherwise made their presence felt.

The appointment of Shaikh Farid Bukhari Murtaza Khan as Governor of Punjab in mid 1611[91] led to a serious note being taken of the fortification of Amritsar and the growing power of Guru Hargobind, his warlike activities and virtually running parallel civil government. Murtaza Khan was being opposed in the Emperor's Court by Wazir Khan from Jhang, who had held Guru Arjan in high esteem. The completion of Lohgarh Fort by 1612 and increased strength of militia of Guru Hargobind enabled Murtaza Khan to send alarming reports to Jahangir who summoned Guru Hargobind to Agra in the latter half of 1612. This was notwithstanding the sharp swing in the religious policy of Jahangir, as charges against Guru Hargobind were political in character.

After making appropriate arrangements for running of services at Amritsar under Baba Buddha and Bhai Gurdas, Guru Hargobind left Amritsar on horse on December 31, 1612.[92] On arrival at Delhi, he was taken into custody in early January 1613 and sent to Gwalior fort where

political prisoners were kept. Already a number of Rajput Rajas and Zamindars from Rajputana and Punjab hills were held there in custody.

The prolonged detention of Guru Hargobind caused perturbation among the Sikhs. They started taking out *prabhat pheris* - singing of purely religious hymns in a procession at early hours of morning and at night - to begin with at Amritsar and later at Tarn Taran and other places. That helped to keep up the spirit. The enterprising Sikhs would visit the Gwalior fort and leave after bowing their head towards it or circumambulating it.

The traditional Sikh chroniclers narrate the use of supernatural powers by leading Sikhs including Baba Buddha, Bhai Gurdas, Bhai Jetha and others to haunt Jahangir at night during his sleep. It is a fact that Jahangir was whimsical, and used to consult astrologers. According to his *Memoirs*, he consulted astrologers and moved out of his capital Agra in September 1613 for Ajmer, inter alia, on a pilgrimage to the mausoleum ofKhwaja Moinuddin Chishti.[93] He remained at Ajmer and thereafter was moving about in Gujarat and Sind. He returned to Agra after a lapse of 5 years and 4 months in January 1619. This prolonged period of absence from the capital suggests that something was abnormal with Jahangir.

Jahangir, during the period, increasingly came under the influence of his wife Nur Jahan who was a follower of Hazrat Mian Mir.

The Sikh chroniclers linking Guru Hargobind's release to the influence of Hazrat Mian Mir is not without foundation, as we shall see. The death ofMurtaza Khan in end 1618[94] and Jahangir's falling foul of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi, Mujaddid Alif Sani, and sentencing him to imprisonment at Gwalior Fort in July 1619.[95] were other factors which enabled Nur Jahan to prevail upon Jahangir to order not only the release of Guru Hargobind, but also of 52 Rajput Princes and Zamindars of Rajputana and Punjab hills at the Guru's instance in October 1619. For that, he earned the title of *bandi chhor*, deliverer from prison - from the grateful people. The term *bandi chhor* for Guru Hargobind was used immediately after the release of 52 Rajput princes by Naik Hari Ram, Daroga of Gwalior fort, who had the first hand knowledge of the goings on leading to their release.

Pertinently, about the release of Guru Hargobind from Gwalior fort an entry in *Bhat Vehi*, *Jadobansian*, *Barhtian ka Khata*, reads:

> Guru Hargobind, sixth Guru, son of Guru Arjan, Sodhi Khatri of Chak Guru, (Amritsar), Pargana Nijhariala, was released along with 52 rajas on 14 day of dark halfofKatak, 1676 (the date of Diwali, October 26, 1619). Naik Hari Ram, Daroga, son of Naik Harbans Lal, Chandrabansi Jadav, Barhtian Kanawat, did *deep mala* (lighting small lamps all over the house) in honour of release of *bandi chhor* Guru Hargobind from imprisonment. After staying at the house of Hari Ram for a day, Guru Hargobind left Gwalior and reached Agra.[96]

By end of January, Jahangir was around Goindwal, when on Phagun 1, Bk, 1676 (around end January 1620) Baba Buddha, Bhai Gurdas, Balu Rai, Param Rai, and other devotees came to see him.[97] It may be mentioned that Jahangir arrived at Kalanaur (where earlier Akbar was proclaimed King). around February 8, 1620, and remained there for a fortnight.[98] It was there that he met for the first time in his life Hazrat Mian Mir around February 16, when probably, or shortly before that, Guru Hargobind gained his freedom, after an incarceration of about seven years.

Jahangir makes no mention at all of Guru Hargobind in his memoirs. But the coincidence of Guru Hargobind's accompanying him upto Kalanaur as mentioned in *Bhat Vehis*, and Jahangir's meeting there Hazrat Mian Mir who "despite his great age and weakness" took the trouble of going there on the expressed wishes of Jahangir[99] tends to establish the linkage between the two events as suggested by the Sikh chroniclers. It won't be off the mark to suggest that when Hazrat Mian Mir left Jahangir after the meeting, Guru Hargobind met him there as a free man. And, the two talked to each other and established a good rapport. Hazrat Mian Mir's sending Kaulan or Kumarwan, an adopted daughter of Qazi of Lahore with the consent of her mother to the protection of Guru Hargobind in May 1621 pointed to that.[100]

This seven year long incarceration of Guru Hargobind was a period of crisis for the Sikh Panth. Prithi Chand tried to project that the mantle ofGuruship had fallen on him.[1000a] After his death in 1618, his son Meharban, a capable man and a scholar, sought to subvert the Sikh movement by composing hymns in Guru Arjan's style, and by going in for Guru Nanak's *Janam Sakhi*, biography, in a big way, in the process bringing in Puranic lore. Bhai Gurdas condemned *minas* descendents of Prithi Chand in plural and wrote extensively to effectively contain these schismatics. He asserted that Guru Hargobind was the true successor of Guru Nanak, and the Sikhs should not be misled by the activities ofdistracters. By the exertions of Bhai Gurdas who provided the intellectual framework, Bhai Buddha and other leading disciples, the Sikhs were kept in harness.

The return of Guru Hargobind caused jubilation in the Sikh community. An unfortunate upshot of that was that within a few months, two brides were pledged to him by their parents. Under the custom then prevalent, on Guru Hargobind's refusal, those girls would have remained unmarried throughout their life. So he had to marry Nanaki, on March 28, 1620, and Mehrai also called Marwahi on July 10, 1620.[101] The first incident occurred too close to his release. Taken aback at the second incident, he announced that no one should pledge his daughter to him in future.

Guru Hargobind after his release resumed his daily routine of building healthy minds in healthy bodies of his disciples. The over three month long period of his stay with Jahangir, from his coming out of Gwalior fort to his formal release at Kalanaur, was sufficient for both of them to size up each other, and establish a healthy mutual relationship. There was now no scope of misunderstanding over Guru Hargobind's maintaining a personal bodyguard or raising a militia.

According to the Sikh traditional accounts, Chandu was handed over to the Guru for torturing Guru Arjan and met a sad end at the hands of Sikh *sangat*.[102] Possibly Jahangir's taking Guru Hargobind to Kalanaur wherefrom Chandu came, was to that end. In the absence of Jahangir's any mention of Guru Hargobind, it is difficult to corroborate the whole story.

From the *Bhat Vehis*, it is obvious that Chandu was a historical person. During Guru Hargobind's incarceration, because of Chandu's manoeuverings the town of Sri Gobindpur, founded by Guru Arjan, had'fallen into the hands of his relative Bhagwan Das Gherar. It was obvious for Guru Hargobind to assert his claim to Sri Gobindpur.

This led to two skirmishes within a few days of each other at the end-September and early October 1621 at village Rohila, pargana Batala. Bhagwan Das and his son Rattan Chand, and Chandu's son Karam Chand who were inter-related, all residents of Kalanaur, laid a trap and

unsuccessfully sought to take the Guru by surprise. This led to the first skirmish in which Bhagwan Das was killed and in the second both Karam Chand and Rattan Chand were killed. From the Guru's bodyguard, three were injured in the first skirmish, while Bhai Nanu, Mathura Bhat and Bhai Praga, and some others were killed in the second.[103]

Guru Hargobind effected a lot of improvement in Sri Gobindpur so much so that it came to be known as Hargobindpur. He also constructed a mosque there for use of the Muslims.

The large number of casualties from his side made Guru Hargobind to strengthen his bodyguard and militia. He recruited Pathan mercenaries for training of his soldiers, and as part of his militia. He also admitted into the Sikh fold enterprising people like Bidhi Chand, the Robinhood of Malwa, who discarded his early life and joined the Guru's forces. Guru Hargobind had some seven hundred horses in his stable. His maintaining the militia which included men and horses, from the community's funds, led many writers to surmise that he had accepted a Mansab of 700-horses and 5 guns from Emperor Jahangir. That was far from the truth. Guru Hargobind finds no mention in Jahangir's records of Mansabdars.

Guru Hargobind was not simply building up his forces. He also undertook preaching tours to consolidate the Sikh faith, attracting larger converts. He visited Srinagar in Kashmir Valley, and traversed the two routes to Kashmir. These took him to visit places in Rawalpindi, Jhelum, Gujrat, Sheikhupura and Lahore before returning to Amritsar. In an interesting encounter with Shah Daula in Gujrat, Guru Hargobind explained his philosophy that "A wife is man's conscience, his children perpetuate his memory, wealth enables him to live, arms are needed to extirpate the tyrants." That too constituted a part of his message to the people.

He renewed the faith of the people in Sikhism and gained new converts.

He also visited Doaba and extensively travelled in Malwa using Daroli as the base. His success was more marked in Malwa and people in droves, including Zamindars, embraced Sikhism. Following. Guru Nanak, he endeared himself with lower and downtrodden classes.

Raja of Kahlur, who was one of 52 Rajas who got emancipated from Gwalior Fort, on his way back from Lahore called on Guru Hargobind and offered him a piece of land. The Guru was also on the lookout for a foothold in the Shivalik hills. He sent his son Baba Gurditta who laid the foundation of Kiratpur (a place where praises of Lord are sung) in 1626[104] This place had been blessed by Guru Nanak's visit and the new town incidentally gave Guru Hargobind an alternative headquarters in times of crisis.

Jahangir's death in 1627 put an end to Guru Hargobind's equation with the Emperor. Shahjahan who succeeded him, to begin with, was more favourably inclined toward the Muslim fundamentalists represented by Naqashbandi order. His orders to destroy all temples which were incomplete or were under construction led to the filling up of *Baoli* (oblong shape well with stairs) in Dabbi Bazar Lahore which had been got constructed by' Guru Arjan, and the conversion of the kitchen building to a mosque.

This caused strain in Mughal-Sikh relations. Guru Hargobind now spent more time in secular affairs - training his people in the art of warfare and deciding the civil disputes of his followers coming to the Akal Takht for the purpose.

The change in the temper of the new administration made a number ofhostiles to forge an entente. Apart from the people with deep ideological commitment to Muslim fundamentalism, there were people like Qazi Rustam Khan of Mujang, Lahore, who had a personal grudge against the Guru in providing sanctuary to Kaulan. Meharban (*mind*) son of Prithi Chand despite Guru Hargobind's attempts at reconciliation, was positively hostile. The alliance between minas, orthodox sections of upper caste Hindus, and Muslim officials forged during Akbar's reign, came to be revived with the objective to contain the growing influence of the Sikh faith.

In April 1634 when Guru Hargobind was busy making arrangements for the marriage of his daughter Bibi Viro, an incident of a royal hawk falling to the hands of a hunting party of the Sikhs, who refused to return the bird, was used as an excuse to mount an attack, on the Guru's establishment. Because of the impending attack, Lohgarh fort had been evacuated. The small garrison there was destroyed. The Mughal troops led by Mukhlis Khan advanced to the Guru's palace but found nothing there except for the sweets meant for the marriage party the following day.

Guru Hargobind performed the marriage of his daughter in the nearby village of Jhabal and marshalled his forces to resist the attack, the following day.

A fierce battle lasting nine hours ensued. After Mukhlis Khan's head was split in twain by Guru Hargobind, the pressure of Mughal forces decreased, and they retraced their steps to Lahore. It was not a decisive victory, but broke the spell of Mughal invincibility. In the words of Sir Jadu Nath Sarkar, "Many men came to enlist under the Guru's banner. They said that none else had power to contend with the emperor."[105] *Bhat Vehi Multani-Sindhi* speaks of death of Murtaza Khan in this battle.[106] There is no scope for confusing this Murtaza Khan with Shaikh Farid Bukhari who, as mentioned earlier, died in 1618.

Guru Hargobind retired to Malwa. The Mughal forces re-equipped themselves and led by Qamar Beg and Lal Beg moved thither to confront the Guru.[107]

The two forces met on Tuesday, 17 Poh Bk, 1691 (mid-December 1634) near Marajh.[108] Guru Hargobind had four thousand soldiers and adequate provision for them. He also established control over the solitary well at the place. In the fierce battle that ensued, the Guru's forces suffered over 1200 killed or wounded, but the losses on the other side were much more. In the words of Mohammad Latif, the Mughal force on "being defeated by the Sikhs, fled to Lahore, leaving its commanders slain in the battlefield."[109]

Guru Hargobind retired to Kangar but soon returned to Kartarpur. Painda Khan, the Guru's foster brother, dismissed because of his haughty demeanour, went over to the Mughal side. Another expedition followed under Kale Khan.

Guru Hargobind was besieged in Kartarpur in April 1635. Fighting was spread over many days. Bidhi Chand and Baba Gurditta ably led the Guru's forces. Painda Khan was killed by Guru Hargobind in a personal dual on April 28, 1635.[110] Kale Khan too lost his life. The Guru's force had an upper hand.

By the evening, the Guru's forces were moving, towards Phagwara. A detachment of Mughal forces made a sudden appearance, the following day, at village Palahi. This led to a lot of bloodshed on the two sides. This did not prevent Guru Hargobind's orderly retreat to Shivalik hills.

Within a period of one year, this was the fourth attack on Guru Hargobind. He was not ready for an all out armed confrontation with the provincial authorities. He had nothing to gain by permitting the Punjab Government to continue its military campaigns against the nascent Sikh faith. Guru Hargobind, therefore, continued his onward march and arrived at Kiratpur on 3 Jeth, BK. 1692 (May 1, 1635).[111]

Kiratpur at the foot of Shivalik hills was comparatively inaccessible and formed part of the territory of a hill chief who came under the direct control of the Central Government in Delhi. It was outside the territorial jurisdiction of Punjab. The Lt. Governor of Sirhind to which it adjoined, was under the direct administration of the Central Government. The hill chiefs at the time were favourably disposed towards Guru Hargobind.

The combination of the provincial Mughal officials, Minas and the upper caste Hindus had by now gained its objectives. The official machinery in the Punjab could claim that it had driven the Guru out of its territory. The Minas under Meharban (d. 1641) who was ably assisted by son Harji gained the control of Harimandir which remained in their occupation for over six decades till the close of the century.[112] With the removal of headquarters of Sikhism to Kiratpur and later to Anandpur, away from central Punjab, the orthodox Hindus had the satisfaction of pushing Sikhism into a corner. The *Masand* system, in course of time, went haywires.

Before proceeding further, it would be of interest to go into the impact of removal of the Sikhs headquarters from Amritsar and Mina's ascendancy over there for over six decades.

The Minas played havoc with Sikh ideology. Firstly, they in collaboration with caste Hindus brought in a lot of Puranic mythology in Guru Nanak's *Janam Sakhi*, biography, in the process reducing him to an Avatar within the framework of Hindu pantheonism. Secondly, the Minas under Meharban who claimed himself to be the seventh Guru (with his father Prithi Chand (d. 1619) as the sixth one, succeeding Guru Arjan and being succeeded by Harji as eighth Guru) according to Kesar Singh Chhibbar composed their own *Granth*, in which they included the composition of first four gurus besides their own but excluded the composition of Bhaktas, as they were from low castes. Pandit Kesho was the amaneusis in composing both this *Granth* and Meharban *Janamsakhi* of Guru Nanak. The Minas installed their Granth at Harimandir in place of Guru Arjan's *Adi Granth* which was carried away by Dhir Mal.

Now, to resume the narrative. Because of timely retreat. Guru Hargobind's armed strength was intact though his emphasis now was more on the missionary work. However, hardly had he settled down in Kiratpur when Raja Himmat Chand of Handur, accompanied by his Diwan, Dharam Chand, requested for armed help to ward off aggression by Muhamad Beg, nephew of Nawab Nasar Ali Khan of Ropar. The Guru deputed Baba Gurditta with 100 horsemen. The battle was fought on 1 Savan BK. 1692 (end June 1635) at Nangal Gujran. Muhamad Beg suffered serious reverses. His retreating forces were pursued upto Malikpur Rangran.[113]

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When Nawab Nasar Ali Khan was apprised of Guru Hargobind's presence in the vicinity, he sued for peace. The Guru brought about reconciliation between the two sides. That all the more enhanced his influence among the hill chiefs and the Nawab of Ropar. A grateful Nasar Ali Khan hosted reception for Guru Hargobind shortly afterwards.[114]

The Mughal administration was also pleased at the constructive role played by Guru Hargobind. Shahjahan's eldest son Dara Shukoh, a devout follower of Hazarat Mian Mir, was favourably disposed towards Guru Hargobind and was a factor in the Central government's pursuing a policy of tolerance towards the Sikh movement, as also the other religions.

Guru Hargobind now reorganised the missionary activity. He sent Bidhi Chand to take care of the Sikh organisation and the propagation of faith in the east with headquarters in Bengal, Under his instructions, Baba Gurditta, upon whom had fallen the mantle ofUdasi order as successor of Baba Sri Chand,[115] appointed four head preachers, called *dhuans* or hearths or consecrated seats. These were headed by Almast in north-east with headquarters in Pilibhit, Baba Hasna in Pothohar (Rawalpindi Division), Kashmir, Chhachh and Hazara (area west of Jhelum river upto Kabul), and Phul and Gonda in the central Punjab.[116] They preached Sikhism with considerable zest.

When Guru Hargobind learnt of Almast being ousted from Nanakmata, previously known as Gorakhmata in Pilibhit by Gorakh Panthis, he proceeded there and helped him to re-establish himself. In between at Srinagar, on his way back from a hunting expedition, he met Samarth Ram Das, Maratha saint and later preceptor of Shivaji, who was on his way back from Badrinath-Kedarnath. Being a traditional Sadhu, Samarth Ram Das was surprised to see the Guru armed, riding a horse and accompanied by a large number of armed followers. He could not reconcile the two seemingly opposite phases of Guru Hargobind's life.

The Sikh account of the meeting as given in Sakhi 39 of *Panjah Sakhian* (fifty stories) which forms part of *Sau Sakhi* (hundred stories) makes an interesting reading.

He (Samarth Ram Das) asked the Guru, "I had heard, you occupy the *gaddi* of Guru Nanak. Guru Nanak was a *tyagi sadhu*, a saint who had renounced the world. You are wearing arms and keeping an army and horses. You have yourself called *Sachet Padsha* - A True King. What sort of *sadhu* are you". Guru Hargobind said, "Internally a hermit, and externally a prince; arms mean protection for the poor and destruction for the tyrant. Baba Nanak had not renounced the world but had renounced *maya* - the self and ego. "Ram Das was pleased (to hear this) and said, "This appealeth to my mind."[117]

Samarth Ram Das was inspired by what he saw in Guru Hargobind's camp. This later helped him in initiating the great Maratha warrior Shivaji to a life of national upliftment.

This was for the first time that under Guru Hargobind the seats of Sikhism were consolidated from Kabul in the west to Dacca in the east.

Guru Hargobind was not simply confined to Shivalik hills. He took the marriage party of his grandson Hari Rai in June to Arupshahr in Bulandshar District to Sulakhni - daughter of Daya Ram.[117] He also visited Kurukshetra on the solar eclipse to preach his mission to the large gathering on the occasion.

Azur Sasani Maubid Zulfikar also known as Mohsin Fani, a Parsi, author of *Dabistan-i-Mazhaib*, according to his own admission, came into contact with Guru Hargobind in 1640 A.D.,[118] when the latter was increasingly turning inward to a more contemplative way of life. The Guru was fast losing interest in leading a princely life and started spending more time in solitude. The death of some of his near and dear ones,[119] especially of his elder son Baba Gurditta posed new problems. Baba Gurditta's son Dhirmal who alongwith his mother had stayed back at Kartarpur turned against the grand-father.

After a great deal of contemplation, Guru Hargobind chose Baba Gurditta's second son Hari Rai (b. 1630) to succeed him, before he departed from the world in 1644. His departing instructions to Guru Hari Rai were to keep the cavalry establishment which would help him to lead a life of peace and contemplation.

The pace of pontificate of Guru Hari Rai was set by the last phase j of the life of Guru Hargobind. It was a period of peaceful consolidation.

Some chroniclers have over-emphasised the peaceful and contemplative nature of Guru Hari Rai though they concede that he went on *shikar*, hunting expeditions. As Prof Gandhi has observed, "The Guru was not passive; his was the policy of masterly inactivity."[120]

Keeping in view the limitations of hostility of official machinery in the Punjab, Guru Hari Rai extensively travelled in Doaba and Malwa where he met considerable success in claiming conversions.

With headquarters in Daroli and Nathana, he traversed Malwa more thoroughly. Apart from downcastes and outcastes, he succeeded in converting some leading Zamindars, landed families, considered natural leaders of men.

He made Bhai families ofKaithal and Bagrian responsible for missionary work between Sutlej and Jumna. Bhagat Bhagwan, a Bairagi was reclaimed and appointed in charge of missionary work in the east, where he and his followers established 360 centres.

Guru Hari Rai's relations with Shahjahan improved considerably after he supplied some rare herbs for recovery of his favourite son, Dara Shukoh sometime in 1652. Thereafter, Guru Hari Rai started moving into central Punjab and beyond without being disturbed.

During the war of succession between the sons of Shahjahan in 1658, Guru Hari Rai was not involved, notwithstanding some chroniclers mentioning that he rendered some unspecified assistance to Dara Shukoh.

The coming into power of Aurangzeb to the imperial throne of Delhi marked the beginning of the long, consistent, and active policy to gain a control over the Sikh religious affairs, and make Sikhism a handmaid of the central government in Delhi.

The ire of Aurangzeb fell on Mullah Shah, Sarmad and Guru Hari Rai who were held responsible for the 'heretic' views of Dara Shukoh.

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After Aurangzeb had Dara murdered, and imprisoned his father Shahjahan, he dealt with Mullah Shah (Miyan Mir's successor who died after receiving the imperial summons), and Muhamad Said Sarmad, a Sufi Saint of Jewish origin (for having conferred spiritual sovereignty on Dara Shukoh) who mounted the scaffold.

Aurangzeb thereafter turned his attention to Guru Hari Rai who represented the most active non-Muslim movement in northern India. Two of his messengers carrying summons for the Guru died, one after the other, on the way. That forced Aurangzeb to tone down the contents of his summons. He also asked for the Guru's presence to explain the main tenets of Sikhism.

Guru Hari Rai wrote to the Emperor, "It is against the principles and traditions of Sikh Gurus to go to any King's court either for favours or for political submission. . . .! do not deny that Dara Shukoh, who came here and met us a number of times, was my friend. . . .! blessed Dara Shukoh with spiritual Kingdom of God. . .

"Since your Majesty has expressed such a keen interest in knowledge about the faith of Baba Nanak and the mysteries of Sikh scriptures, I am sending my elder son Ram Rai along with *some* missionaries, to remove your doubts and misgivings about Sikh religion."[121]

Ram Rai (b. 1646) was accompanied by five leading Sikhs of Guru's Darbar headed by Diwan Dargah Mal. He was instructed to fearlessly interpret the Sikh scriptures and history of the great Gurus. He was told that he had the blessings of Guru Nanak.[122] Since in Islam, holiness is associated with showing *karamat* (miracles). Ram Rai was placed in certain situational hazards to fall into the trap. But he went on beyond the minimum requirements. He ignored the call to withdraw from the Emperor's court, and under advice of some corrupt Masands headed by Gurbakhsh of Delhi, he chose to accompany Aurangzeb to Agra. In the process, because of his regards for the Emperor's pleasure, he lost objectivity and prevaricated in correctly interpreting one of Guru Nanak's hymns.[123] When Diwan Dargah Mal apprised him of his faux paus, Ram Rai was full of remorse and hoped for the Guru's forgiveness.

On being apprised by Dargah Mal through a special messenger, Guru Hari Rai immediately sent Ram Rai a letter reprimanding him that "You no longer deserve my affection, and this blunder cannot be forgiven."[124] Ram Rai was advised not to show his face to the Guru. He immediately left Aurangzeb's Court and departed for the Punjab. According to *Bhat Vehi Talaunda*, he was at Kot Pathana near Ropar in May 1661[125] and therefrom left for Lahore.

Aurangzeb by now had made inroads into the Guru's confidants, especially Masands Gurbaksh of Delhi, and Gurdas and Tara (descendents of Bhai Behio) and their associates, apart from Ram Rai himself. He used some of them to administer poison to Guru Hari Rai who died at the young age of 31, on October 6, 1661,[126] after installing Ram Rai's younger brother Hari Krishan, (b. Savan Vadi, BS 1709 - corossponding to July 1652) as his successor.

The departing instructions of Guru Hari Rai to Guru Hari Krishan were not to permit Sikhism to become a political tool in the hands of Delhi rulers.

Guru Hari Krishan remained mostly in Kiratpur for over two years before he received summons in January 1664 from Aurangzeb for personal appearance.[127] A short while earlier, the

Emperor had called for Ram Rai. Masand Gurbaksh of Delhi appears to have been the main actor in these developments. The message was conveyed through an emissary of Mirza Raja Jai Singh. Aurangzeb's objective was to contain, and if possible destroy, the Sikh faith, by an interplay of contradictory forces.

On his way to Delhi, Guru Hari Krishan arrived at Panjokhra, near Ambala. Stung at his sermon that any one could attain *gyan*, inner knowledge about God, Pandit Lal Chand, a learned Brahmin challenged the Guru to interpret *Gita* to prove his point.

Guru Hari Krishan in all humility asked Lal Chand to bring some one from the village to have *Gita* interpreted for him. Lal Chand's choice fell on one Chhaju Ram, an illiterate water-carrier. Guru Hari Krishan looked into Chhaju Ram's eyes, and lo, he felt illumined from within. To the utter amazement of Lal Chand and those present, he gave a thorough exposition of some *Salokas* of Gita. Both Lal Chand and Chhaju Ram were converted to Sikhism.[128]

On arrival at Delhi, Guru Hari Krishan stayed at the *haveli*, (Bungalow) of Raja Jai Singh in Raisina, where Gurdwara Bangia Sahib stands today. There, Baba Tegh Bahadur, who had left Kiratpur in June 1656 and was staying at Patna, met him in early March and was apprised of the reasons for the Guru's being summoned to Delhi. Tegh Bahadur conveyed condolences on death of Guru Hari Rai, and took leave to go to Bakala where he had stayed for 12 years (1644-56) after the death of Guru Hargobind.

Delhi at the time was in the grip of cholera and small pox. The Guru and his entourage immediately started social work among the sufferers on a vast scale. The *Charnamrit*, (water wherein the Guru had dipped his feet) provided the panacea for all the ills of the suffering humanity - Hindus and Muslims alike. Raja Jai Singh got constructed a big reservoir, full of *Charnamrit*.

Guru Hari Krishan showed an unwillingness to visit Aurangzeb's court, as he did not want the office of Guru or the Sikh movement to become a subject matter of intervention by Delhi rulers. He put off visiting the court for sometime. In order not to compromise Jai Singh's position, he chose the place near Jumna, where Bala Sahib Gurdwara now stands, for his encampment and holding religious congregations. But on Raja Jai Singh's insistence, he decided to stay at his *haveli* during the nights. Raja Jai Singh also used all the diplomatic- skills at Aurangzeb's Court to uphold the Guru's position.

According to Swarup Singh Kaushik's *Guru Kian Sakhian* and Swarup Das Bhalla's *Mehma Parkash*. Guru Hari Krishan only once, on Thursday, March 24, 1664, visited Aurangzeb's Court, when Ram Rai emphatically declared that the decision of his father in selecting his younger brother as his successor to the pontificate of Guru Nanak was based on cogent reasons, and that he was now under the command of the new Guru.[129]

That sealed the issue so far as Guru Hari Krishan was concerned. But Aurangzeb had his own game plan. He wanted to keep both Hari Krishan and Hari Rai under his thumb. As advised by Masand Gurbaksh of Delhi, he planned to ask Guru Hari Krishan to perform miracles, the way Ram Rai had done earlier in his Court. So he asked those present to come the next working day.

Guru Hari Krishan was determined to uphold the dignity of the house of Baba Nanak and not let it be made subservient to the imperial rulers of Delhi.

By the evening. Guru Hari Krishan developed fever and the following day signs of small pox showed up on his face. After an affliction of four days, he passed on Guruship to Baba at Bakala, without naming him publicly, on March 30, 1664, and left his mortal remains.[130] He made it clear to Diwan Dargah Mal, Bhai Gurditta, the high priest, besides his mother, that he meant Baba Tegh Bahadur, who incidentally was the only one from the Guru's family at Bakala at the time.

Guru Hari Krishan's passing on the succession without openly naming him was a masterly strategy to defuse the issue of succession and guruship at the imperial court. Guru Tegh Bahadur who had the silent communion with the spirit of Guru Hari Krishan put a veil over his unique experience of the transparent light, the resplendent soul of Guru Nanak entering and illuminating his inner self.

The emergence of 22 impostors - Sodhis of Lahore, Mina-Sodhis of Amritsar, the descendants of Suraj Mal including Dhir Mal of Kartarpur, and many fake Sodhis who set up their *manjis* at Bakala, and canvassed for public acclaim was not an unwelcome development. That helped to diffuse and confound the issue so far as imperial authorities in Delhi were concerned.

It was for some similar reasons that Diwan Dargah Mal, Baba Gurditta the high priest, and Mata Sulakhani took about four and a half months to formally anoint Guru Tegh Bahadur. Baba Gurditta applied saffron mark and presented the coconut and five pice consecrated by Guru Hari Krishan to Guru Tegh Bahadur only on August 11, 1664.[131] Guru Tegh Bahadur extracted a promise from them to maintain a dignified silence for the time being.

It was after another eight weeks that Guru Tegh Bahadur thought the time opportune for disclosing his mission, through Makhan Shah Vanjara, a trader from Muzaffrabad, Kashmir who announced from the house top on October 7, *Guru ladho* re -Guru has been found - thrice to the congregation gathered for Diwali.[132]

Guru Tegh Bahadur left for Kiratpur to attend a *bhog* ceremony on October 14, when he also took formal possession of the Guru's property including the aigrette, hawk and horses, etc.[133]

According to the *Guru Kian Sakhian*, Guru Tegh Bahadur left for Bakala around October 17. After a couple of months, he left on a preaching tour of Majha and Malwa.

He was at Amritsar on Purnima of Maghar, Bk. 1721 (Novmber 22, 1664). The Minas locked the doors of Harimandir fearing that Guru Tegh Bahadur had reverted to the place to take it over. The Guru spent the night by the side of Akal Takht where a shrine now stands. An enterprising Mina obtained his *nishan*, invocation written in his hand, on a sheet of paper and later pasted it on the coverpage of the Mina Granth to give it credibility.

Guru Tegh Bahadur spent two months in Majha when he, inter allia, visited Verka, Chukewali, Nijhariala, Tarn Taran, Khadur, Goindwal, Khem Karan and Chola. Thereafter, he extensively, toured Malwa. He proceeded to Zira, Moga, Daroli and after staying there for sometime reached Sabo Ki Talwandi where he got dug a tank, named by him Guru Sar. The construction began on Baisakhi of 1665 and the tank was dug up by *kar sewa*, voluntary labour of the villagers, in 10 days. A sudden shower of rain in the catchment area filled the tank.

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From there he blessed various villages in Bangar area and arrived at Dhamdhan where he got constructed a well. He also started construction of a house for himself.

Here an emissary of Rani Champa Devi conveyed an urgent message of the death of her husband, the ruler ofBilaspur, and his *bhog* ceremony on May 13, 1665. Guru Tegh Bahadur accompanied by his mother Nanaki, and members of his Darbar reached Bilaspur.

Concerned at the Guru's plans to shift to Bangar area, Rani Champa persuaded mother Nanaki to stay instead in Bilaspur area. She offered three villages of Lodipur, Mianpur and Sohota to the Guru to set up his headquarters.

Baba Gurditta son of Baba Buddha laid the foundation of a new town of Nanaki Chak on June 19, 1665, at the site ofMakhowal in village Sohota. The Guru spent the rainy season at Chak Nanaki.

Thereafter, he again left for Bangar area. He travelled via Ropar, Banur, and visited a larger tract.[134] He arrived at Dhamdhan where he stayed at his new house. The *sangat* from far and wide came for Diwali celebrations there.

The acceptance ofGuruship by Tegh Bahadur without obtaining the approval of the imperial government at Delhi was considered an affront by Aurangzeb. He deputed Alam Khan Rohilla to take the Guru into custody, and bring him to his presence. Alam Khan and his escort showed themselves up in Dhamdhan when the Guru was in the deep forest on a hunting expedition. Guru Tegh Bahadur and his entourage were rounded up and taken to Delhi on Kartik Sudi 11, 1722 (November 8, 1665).[135]

That was the only time that Guru Tegh Bahadur met Aurangzeb. According to some historians including S. M. Latif, the Emperor had many disputations with Guru Tegh Bahadur. Sarup Das Bhalla mentions that Aurangzeb wanted him to show miracles or be ready to be put to death.[136]

Guru Tegh Bahadur refused the first option. Swarup Singh's *Guru Kian Sakhian* mentions that Aurangzeb ordered the execution of Guru Tegh Bahadur. But the intervention of Kanwar (later Raja) Ram Singh son of Raja Jai Singh made Aurangzeb to relent, and order instead the detention of Guru Tegh Bahadur and his entourage under his care. They were released on Poh Vadi 5, 1722 (December 16, 1665).[137]

Guru Tegh Bahadur and entourage left for Patna, his headquarters now for almost a decade. He resumed his preaching in the Gangetic valley with a greater vigour.

Guru Tegh Bahadur was mainly functioning amidst the people of eastern U.P. and Bihar with occasional visits to Orissa and Bengal - a new set of people who had to be taught the message of Sikhism in extremely simple language. Therefore his hymns, especially meant for the new audience, were couched in extremely simple language.

"There is no obscurity in his descriptions, ideas and expression. Even the expression of spiritual experience is uninvolved. His simplicity can be seen from the fact that he repeatedly refers to a few mythological stories. It is as if he were driving the point home to the audience by telling

them stories when they appeared not to grasp it. "He was addressing newly initiated Sikhs" with a comparatively lower intellectual level."[138]

Guru Tegh Bahadur carried on his missionary work for two years when Raja Ram Singh on imperial campaign to Assam contacted him around Patna and requested him to accompany him. His mother Pushpa Devi who had a great faith in the Sikh Gurus had advised her son to take Guru Tegh Bahadur along with him to offset the known taumatologic powers of the Assamese. The Mughal forces gained an upper hand over the Assamese in early 1669. Guru Tegh Bahadur was a success in effecting a compromise between the two sides. In honour of that, the forces of the two parties jointly raised a big mound of earth at Dhubri where now stands a Sikh shrine marking the event.

Guru Tegh Bahadur blessed the Assamese Raja Sug Deo's wife with a son, to be named Rattan Rai after the diamond in his finger-ring which he offered to the Queen.[139]

During the period of imperial campaign in Assam, Guru Tegh Bahadur travelled very widely in eastern parts of Bengal upto Chittagong and some parts of Assam. He established *sangats* of his followers. It was for the first time after Guru Nanak, that one of his successors was personally visiting those parts and renewing the faith of the people.

The change in Aurangzeb's religious policy in April 1669 to the detriment of non-Muslims, caused considerable concern to Guru Tegh Bahadur. He now wanted to be by the side of his people. He immediately wound up his travels and repaired to Patna. From there, he made his wife and son, accompanied by some members of his Darbar, to travel by a direct route reaching Lakhnaur near Ambala in September 1670.[140] He, with leading members of Darbar, took a different route and reached Lakhnaur via Delhi where he stayed for some days at the house of Rani Pushpa Devi in Raisina and made his assessment.

After a stay for a couple of days with Nawab Saif Khan at Saifabad, according to Swarup Singh's *Guru Kian Sakhian*, Guru Tegh Bahadur, his family and entourage moved via Kartarpur to Bakala, where he stayed for a year and a half. In early 1672 he moved to Chak Nanaki. It was there that his son Gobind Rai learnt horse riding, and was married to Jitan on 15 Jeth, Bk. 1730 (May 13, 1673).[141]

Aurangzeb's orders were particularly directed against idol worshippers. The orthodox Hindus in the Punjab who had been conspiring with the local officials against the Sikh Panth now for over a century, and were most adversely affected, took an ostrich like stance and looked towards the Sikhs to sort out their problems.

After the *chaumasa* i.e. rainy season of 1673, sometime in October, Guru Tegh Bahadur began an extensive tour of Bangar area and Malwa. It lasted till the end of 1674 or early 1675. In the absence of exact reports, it is difficult to decipher the precise course of the travel itinerary adopted by the Guru.

Wherever he went, Guru Tegh Bahadur got a rousing reception from the villagers and the Zamindars. His efforts to mobilise the people to a new socio-religious consciousness was taken as a threat by the authoritarian regime of Aurangzeb which was midway through its proselytisation policy. The intelligence reports linking Guru Tegh Bahadur's generating new enthusiasm amongst

the people to the Pathan leader Hafiz Adam of Banoor's movement (which was considered subversive of law and order) for which he was banished in 1642, was sinister in character.[142] To Aurangzeb, Guru Tegh Bahadur's moulding the mass opinion was unacceptable as it challenged his vision of place of Islam in India. Syed Ghulam Husain Khan in his *Siyar-ul-Mutakhirin* mentions that Aurangzeb was told that the increase in the number of the Guru's followers and financial resources could constitute a threat to the stability of the empire. That was notwithstanding his admission that "the companions of Guru Tegh Bahadur moved about like mendicants: the bearing of swords and arms was not customary among them".[143] The currency of such type of reports by intelligencers was reflective of the greater impact of Guru Tegh Bahadur's tour on the masses.

After return from the tour. Guru Tegh Bahadur's receiving in May 1675 a delegation of Kashmiri Brahmins,[144] who were feeling the pinch of Aurangzeb's new religious policy, was considered menacing. Precisely, a delegation of 17 was led by Pandit Kirpa Ram (Dutt) of Mattan. He was well aware of the potentialities of the Sikh movement to stand up to the Mughal tyranny.

The Brahmin delegation had two types of people. While the leader and a handful of others were oriented towards the Sikh movement,[145] the bulk of the Brahmins were firmly rooted in *varnashramdharma*, inbuilt caste inequalities. The first question that arose was, should the latter type of Brahmins compromise their faith by taking food in Guru's *langar*, community kitchen? Guru Tegh Bahadur rose above narrow considerations, and appointed the Brahmin's helper Ganga Dhar Kaul alias Gangu Brahmin to his household to cater to the Brahmin's food and other requirements.[145a]

For Guru Tegh Bahadur, the issue posed by Kashmir! Brahmins was of wider significance. He sermonised that a sacrifice was needed to shame the Mughal rulers into reason and to rouse the society from its slumber. He added, "Guru Nanak will protect you. "This was in consonance with his philosphy of "fear not, frighten not" or put in Ayatollah Khomeini's words, "Neither will we oppress anyone, nor succumb to oppression". It helped to charter a new course in the history of humankind.

Aurangzeb took it as an affront on the part of Guru Tegh Bahadur to side with the idolatorous Brahmins. He therefore "issued the *farman* for Tegh Bahadur's arrest, but the order was kept secret".[146] This was sent to the Nawab of Sirhind who passed it on to the *Kotwal* Mirza Nur Muhammad Khan of Ropar, in whose jurisdiction Chak Nanaki lay. He was on a lookout for a suitable opportunity.

Guru Tegh Bahadur nominated his son Gobind Rai (b. December 18, 1661) as the next Guru, and accompained by leading personages of his Darbar, Dewan Mati Das, Sati Das and Dayal Das, started for Delhi to take up the Brahmin's case. They were taken into custody at village Malikpur Ranghran, Pargana Ghanaula on July 12, 1675.[147] They were sent to Sirhind where they remained for about four months, before being sent to Delhi on receipt of formal orders from Aurangzeb, who throughout the period remained at Hasan Abdal.

Meanwhile, Shaikh Saifuddin Ahmed Sirhindi, the *Sajjadanashin* (successor) of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi (Mujaddad Alif Sani) who was held in high esteem by Aurangzeb, was entrusted to convince Guru Tegh Bahadur of the sublimity of Islam and bring him within the Islamic fold. This is supported by the fact that the traditional Sikh historians, confusing Saifuddin Sirhindi with Nawab

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Saifuddin of Saifabad - the Guru's friend and admirer -were led to believe that the Guru spent four months with the latter and offered himself for arrest either at Delhi or Agra.[148]

Guru Tegh Bahadur was tortured while in detention in Sirhind and eventually taken to Delhi in an iron cage on November 5, 1675. The Subedar of Delhi and the royal Qazi formally went into the motion of offering them the options of showing miracles, accepting Islam or facing death. Guru Tegh Bahadur and his disciples refused the first two, and were ready for the third.

Bhai Mati Das was tied between two logs and cut into twain with a saw, Dayal Das was boiled to death in a cauldron of hot water, while Sati Das was roasted alive with cotton wrapped around his body. Guru Tegh Bahadur, after witnessing martyrdom of the three disciples, was beheaded on November II.[149]

The Sikhs in Delhi showed a daring courage in seizing two parts of the Guru's body. Taking advantage of the duststorm which engulfed the city, Bhai Nannu Rai, Agya and his son Jaita, and Udha Rathaur took the Guru's head to Jaita's house. Jaita alongwith Bhai Nannu and Udha took it to Kiratpur on November 16, 1675. It was cremated at Makhowal the following day. Meanwhile, the severed body of the Guru was taken over by Bhai Lakhi Das also called Lakhi Shah Vanjara and his three sons Nigahia, Hema and Harhi of Jadobansia Barhtia Kanaut, and Naik Dhooma son of Bhai Nannu at night. It was taken to the house of Lakhi Das in Raisina, and cremated the following night when he performed the ceremony in the process putting his house to fire, to prevent detection by the authorities.[150] According to Dr. Trilochan Singh the two parts of the Guru's body were removed in complicity with Kotwal and Daroga, Khawaja Abdullah.[151]

A day after the martyrdom, the bodies of the Guru's three disciples were handed over to the Sikhs who cremated them where they had cremated a day earlier Baba Gurditta's body, off Bhogal by side of the Jumna, where earlier Guru Hari Krishan was cremated.

Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom was unique and unparalleled in the annals of human history. He laid down his life in defence of religious tolerance, of freedom of worship, and freedom of conscience. In practical parlance, this meant defence of the ritual sacred thread and frontal mark signifying the Brahminical way of life, which Sikhism had discarded now for two centuries. Here was a martyrdom which was self sought for the defence of basic human values, which centuries later were incorporated by the U. N. General Assembly in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in December 1948.[152]

Guru Gobind Singh in his autobiography, *Bachitar Natak*, (Resplendent Drama), wrote:

To protect their right to wear their caste-mark and sacred thread,
Did he, in the dark age, perform the supreme sacrifice;
To help the saintly, he went to the utmost limits,
He offered his head but heaved not a sigh of regret.
He suffered martyrdom for the sake of his moral principles,
He lost his life but not the celestial horizon of his communion with God;
He disdained to perform miracles or jugglers tricks,
For these fill men of God with shame.
Having broken the potsherd (of his body) on the head of the ruler of Delhi,

He went to the abode of the Lord;
None has ever performed such a unique deed. That Tegh Bahadur has.
When Tegh Bahadur passed away, there was mourning throughout the world,
The world was stunned and amazed (at his laying down his life for other's religion),[153]
While the shouts of glory, glory, glory rent the whole heaven. [154]

Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom led to the first acts of militancy at the people's level. *Maasir-i-Alamgiri* (p. 94) records two such incidents - the first one in June-July 1676 when a campaigner flung a stick at Aurangzeb when he was mounting a horse in the compounds of *Dewan-i-Aam*, and the other on Friday, October 27, 1676, when a disciple of Guru Tegh Bahadur flung two bricks at Aurangzeb, one of which reached the chair where he was seated.[155]

The attempts by the common man to punish the imperious ruler of Delhi were symptomatic of the change that was taking place in the Sikh society. It blazed a new trail of commitment to 'an open struggle against organised oppression of the state. Guru Gobind had to build from that. That led to his evolving the doctrine of *dharamyudh*, of waging righteous war against the forces of evil, tyranny and oppression of all sorts using religions as a social catalyst.

An indirect offshoot of martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur was the setback it caused to Minas and other dissident Sodhis. Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom was followed by the Mughal persecution of dissident Sodhis. Dhirmal, the chief among them, was detained in Ranthambore fort where he died in 1677. The following year, his thirty year old son, Ram Chand alongwith three others, was burnt alive in Chandni Chowk, Delhi. These executions made dissident Sodhis and Minas irrelevant in Punjab, and their position became listless and supine.

Guru Gobind Singh did not deviate from the guideline laid down by Guru Nanak. Rather he brought to culmination the salient aspects of Guru Nanak's philosophy.

Guru Nanak had described God as *asur sanghar*, destroyer of demons. In one of his hymns, he had spoken of God applying the necessary corrective to a series of gods, and demi-gods, and destroying the demons to save his saints. The list is formidable and includes Brahma, Bal, Harichand, Arjun, Harnakhsh, Ravan, Madh, Madhkshaswa, Kaitab, Jara Sandh, Kaljaman, Raktbij, Kal Nem, Duryodhana, Janmeja, Kans, Kes, Chandur, and a host of others.[156] Guru Gobind keeping in view the need of the time decided to delve deeper into the epic literature to unravel the mystery and the processes of God's benevolent intervention in history. Having gained mastery over Sanskrit apart from Braj, Persian, Arabic and Punjabi languages, he was aptly qualified to do so. He had also acquired a rare adeptness in the art of offence and defence, to put the knowledge he acquired to practical use for the cause of *dharam yudh*, which was uppermost in his mind.

The first decade of his pontificate, which he spent at Anandpur, was a portent of things to follow. To begin with, he composed *Jap* and *Akal Ustati*. In the Jap he mentioned of hundered of attributes of God in their diversity - Beneficient Lord, Destroyer and Annihilator of all, whose limits where not known to the Hindu trinity. He began *Akal Ustati*- Praise of God, the Immortal - by describing him as All-steel/ All - death, who is " my only Refuge", and "may He protect me ever".

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In this composition, he dilated on the functional attributes of God - universal in character, cutting across boundaries of races, continents and languages - sustainer of all, for all times. To him, "temple and mosque are the same, and so is their from of worship. All humankind has the same components - of earth, ether, air, water and fire - and differences whatsoever are only of dress, custom and country. For the benefit of all, he utters nothing but the Truth that he alone attains God, who loves". He denounced the superstitions of every kind as also rituals and codes of conduct as practised by various sects of Hindus and Muslims. "Without loving devotion, nothing avails; God cherishes the poor, saves His saints and destroys His enemies."

These two compositions helped to set clear the contours of his philosophy - non sectarian, non-partisan in character - in tune with Guru Nanak's teachings of universal humanism and strict monotheism. This left no doubts about his attitude to the heroes of epic literature which he took up thereafter.

During the period, he translated from Sanskrit into Brajbhasha a portion of Markandaya Purana known as *Chandi Charitra Ukti Bilas* and started working on *Krishna Avatar*. He very much liked Bhai Nand Lal Goya's manuscript *Bandagi Nama* presented to him in 1682 and changed its title to *Zindagi Nama*.[157] He termed Hirda Ram Bhalla's 'Hanuman Natak' as valuable, to turn cowards into the brave. That was in consonance with the Guru's objectives.

Earlier in 1679 he installed a huge kettledrum called *Ranjit Nagara* and it was being beaten morning and evening. Every evening with the beat of drum he would go for hunting. The following year he issued *hukamnamahs* asking the *sangat* to make offerings of books, horses and weapons. From now on, there was sharp increase in gatherings at Baisakhi. On Baisakhi of 1684, he laid the foundation of a new town by the side of Chak Nanaki and named it Anandpur, the abode of bliss. It was startegically located to meet his future requirements.

The Guru's rising power signified by the daily beating of *Ranjit Nagara*, the symbol of sovereignty, and greater attendance of the Sikhs at Anandpur, caused social tensions and uneasiness at state level.

Guru Gobind spent next four years, 1685-89, in Sirmur hills in Nahan state on the invitation of Raja Medni Parkash: he was ill at ease with Raja Fateh Shah of Garhwal, who had occupied some of his area. The Guru brought about reconcilition between the two, and in the process won over Ram Rai who otherwise was feeling miserable because of his contumacious Masand, Gurbakhsh.

The Guru constructed a fort namely Paonta, meaning foothold, by the side ofJumna which provided a salubrious place for hunting in natural surroundings, carrying on intellectual work and building up his forces.

He wrote there *Shastra Nam Mala*, giving an account of the weapons of the time, *Var Sri Bhagauti Ji*, popularly called *Chandi di Var*, dealing with battles of Goddess Chandi to uphold righteousness and justice, and finished *Krishna Avatar* in July-August 1688 amidst news of impending attack by Raja Fateh Shah. Concluding his translation *of Krishna Avatar* he clearly stated, "I have

translated into the vernacular the tenth story of the Bhagvat with no other intention, O'God, except of religious war, *dharam yudh*."

The Guru strengthened the training and equipment of his forces. On recomendations of Pir Badruddin alias Buddhu Shah of nearby Sadhaura, he employed 500 Pathans discharged from Mughal army. They were led by Bhikhan Khan, Najabat Khan, Hayat Khan and Kale Khan.[158]

Guru Gobind heard with pain the news of Ram Rai's body being cremated when he was in deep trance, by his Masands, despite protests by his wife Punjab Kaur in 1687. Guru Gobind with his armed bodyguards attended his bhog ceremony and helped Punjab Kaur to succeed Ram Rai in his apostolic work. He also punished the erratic Masands. On his bhog anniversary the following year, the Guru sent Diwan Nand Chand with an armed guard. On Punjab Kaur's request Diwan Nand Chand was entrusted to lead the prayer. Obviously, the prayer recited at Dehra Dun was slighty different to the one offered at Anandpur. Mahant Gurbakhsh objected. Punjab Kaur made him shut up.

Feeling insulted, he went over to Raja Fateh Shah in Sri Nagar and told him that Guru Gobind was going to take over the *dera* of Ram Rai at Dehra Dun, which would lead to erosion of Garhwal's influence. Punjab Kaur warned Guru Gobind of Fateh Shah's impending attack.

That brings us to the Battle of Bhangani fought in end-August 1688. Guru Gobind has given a graphic account of the battle in *Bachitar Natak*.[159]

Fateh Shah was assisted by the Rajas of Jasrot, Dhadwal and Chandel apart from Bhikhan Khan, Najabat Khan and Hayat Khan with their mercenaries who had defected from the Guru's side and gone over to Fateh Shah's forces. The battle lasted one day and the Guru's forces, suffering only four casualities, won a decisive victory.[160] Raja Medni Parkash in whose territory the battle was fought, and whose guest Guru Gobind at the time was, against all civilised behaviour, remained neutral.

The Guru wound up his establishment in Paonta and repaired to Anandpur where construction meanwhile had gone on, in early 1689.

Guru Gobind now reorganised his forces. Firstly, he found that mercenaries were unreliable. So also were the Udasis all of whom except their leader Mahant Kirpal had run away on eve of the battle of Bhangani. The brunt of attack was faced by the Sikhs who now got primary place in the Guru's forces. Secondly, he ordered the construction of five forts around Anandpur which, when ready, were named Anandgarh, Lohgarh, Taragarh, Agamgarh and Fatehgarh.[161]

The reorganisation of the Guru's forces was still in the process, when he had to fight another battle. Briefly, Alif Khan was sent by the Governor of Jammu to collect tributes from the hill chiefs who stated that if the Raja of Kahlur (Bilaspur) pays they would follow suit. Bhim Chand requested the Guru for succour which was granted. He made a league consisting of himself, Raja Gopal of Jaswal and Sukh Deo of Jasrota. Alif Khan supported by Raja Kirpal Chand of Kangra and Raja Dayal of Bijharwal was defeated at the battle of Nadaun on Beas on 22 Chet Bk. 1747

(March 1691).[162] Guru Gobind remained on the river bank for 8 days and visited the places of various rajas. Thereafter, followed negotiations when in spite of victory the hill chiefs agreed to pay tributes to the Mughal government.

Guru Gobind, as he writes in *Bachitar Natak*, now had peace for many years.

After the Baisakhi of 1693, he travelled to Bangar and Malwa. He visited, inter alia, Sabo ki Talwandi, Dhamdhan, Jakhal, Guna, Lahra Gaga, Chhajali, Suman, Dhuda, Saifabad, Rajpur, Banur, Kotia Pathana and Dun on invitation of Punjab Kaur, and returned via Haridwar.[163] With family, he attened the marriage of, Chaudhary Nihang Khan's son, Alam Khan in Kotia Nihang Khan near Roper in early May 1694.

Meanwhile, Aurangzeb, who had been operating in the south since 1682 (never to return), was ruthlessly pursuing his policy of suppression of infidels which included not only various denominations of Hindus including Marathas and Rajputs, but Shia Muslims too. The ire fell on the Guru's Sikhs also who were expelled from the cities. According to *Akhbarat-i-Mualla*, the orders issued by him on November 20, 1693, read: "News from Sirhind. Gobind declares himself to be Guru Nanak. Faujdars ordered to prevent him from assembling (his forces)".[164] When these orders did not produce much effect, (according to *Maasir-i-Alamgiri* p. 153) "a general order was issued for their massacre."

In the sarkar of Sirhind at Burya, a Sikh temple was demolished and mosque constructed instead. "The Sikhs in their turn pulled down the mosque and killed the Imam."[165]

Pursuant to Aurangzeb's orders, followed a series of expeditions by the Mughal authorities against the Guru. As the situation developed, these got enmeshed into campaigns against the hill chiefs for payment of tributes.

To begin with, Dilawar Khan, Governor of Lahore, sent his son Rustam Khan with instructions to proceed straight to Anandpur. He arrived in August 1695 and camped for the night by the side of a dry rivulet. The. Guru learnt of the arrival of Mughal forces from the Sikhs who went early in the morning for a bath in the river. He immediately marshalled his forces. A sudden flood in the rivulet caused havoc in Rustam Khan's troops which ran helter skelter and retreated without putting up a fight.[166]

Then followed Husain Khan in the winter of 1695. He fell foul of the hill chiefs. He fought a pitched battle in February 1696 with Raja Gopal of Guler who, inter alia, was supported by 300 chosen Sikhs of the Guru led by Sangat Rai.[167] He was killed and his forces dispersed.

Thereafter followed Jujhar Singh, a Rajput, who was especially commissioned by the Mughal authorities. He was intercepted in April 1696 by Gaj Singh of Jaswal, and after showing a lot of heroism was killed. The forces failed to reach Anandpur.[168]

At the instance of the Governor of Punjab, that the hill Chiefs had not paid their tributes now for four years, Aurangzeb sent prince Muazzam in the fall of 1696. Muazzam remained at Lahore and sent his deputy Mirza Beg who punished the hill chiefs. He also molested the persons

who chose to desert the Guru or proved disloyal to him. But the Guru at Anandpur was left unmolested,[169] because of the equation he had with prince Muazzam now for over a decade.

Meanwhile, Guru Gobind in 1695 ordained his Sikhs not to cut their hair and let their natural growth right from the birth of a child. On death too, they were not to get their heads shaved. The Sikhs were also asked to wear a steel bracelet on right hand.[170] During the next few years there was an increasing number of *Keshadhari* Sikhs at Baisakhi and Diwali gatherings.

In 1697-98, he took serious note of misdoings of Masands. He abolished the institution as it had become thoroughly corrupt.

The literary pursuits at his Darbar yielded rich dividends. According to *Guru Kian Sakhian*, *Charitropakhyan* was finished in 1696. Guru Gobind completed *Ram Avatar* in 1698. In his own autobiography, *Bachitar Natak* updated early next year, he spelled out the purport of his mission: to uphold the saints and destroy the wicked. He was but a God's devotee; those who speak of him as God, would burn in the fires of hell.[171]

That brought Guru Gobind to the culmination of the Sikh movement. For the Baisakhi of 1699, he sent *hukamnamahs* to the Sikhs all over Hindustan and beyond to visit Anandpur. The people were asked to visit with their hair unshorn. The hill chiefs, who, according to one account, were taken into confidence about the Guru's programme, were present in strength.[172]

To a huge gathering on Baisakhi (March 29, 1699), with his sword drawn. Guru Gobind roared, "Is there any one here who would lay down his life for *dharma*?" On his third call, Daya Ram, a Sobti Khatri, of Sialkot offered his head. The Guru seized him by the arm, and took him to a tent especially erected. With his sword drenched in blood, he came out and repeated the call. Mohkam Chand a washerman from Dwarka, Sahib Chand a barber from Bidar, Dharm Das a Jat from Hastinapur (U.P.) and Himmat Chand a cook from Jagannath Puri, in turn, offered themselves.[173] He paraded them with unique dress symbolised by five K's viz, *kes* (unshorn hair), *kanga* (comb to keep them clean), *kachha*, (short drawers), *kara* (arm bracelet) and *kirpan* (sword).

Thereafter he had the vessel containing *charanpahul* emptied in Sutlej, and refilled with fresh water. He started stirring it with the double-edged sword[174] to the recitation of *Japji*, *Jap Saheb*, *Anand*, Swayas, and *Chaupai*. While in the process, the sugar crystals, *patashas*, were added by Mata Jito Ji[175] at the instance of Bhai Ram Kaur or Ramkanwar later Gurbakhsh Singh, grand son of Baba Buddha.

He recited three couplets from *shastar nam mala* seeking the protection of Eternal god - who is shield, sword, dagger etc, - the embodiment of valour and victory in the world before administering the baptism to the *panj piaras*, the Five Beloved Ones, who constituted the nucleus of the Khalsa.

Guru Gobind told the Five Beloved Ones that they had been freed from their previous family origin (*janamnash*), creed (*dharamnash*) rituals (*karamnash*) duality (*bhramnash*), and occupation (*shramnash*) and had all become members of the Khalsa, in perfect equality. He gave them the

common appellation of Singh, hitherto associated with Rajputs, and spelled out the code of conduct.[176] He gave corporate leadership of the Khalsa to a group of five.

Guru Gobind then begged the Five Beloved Ones to administer him the baptism, and admit him into the fold of the Khalsa. Thereafter, he assumed the name Gobind Singh.

Addressing the huge audience. Guru Gobind Singh said, "From now on, you have become casteless. No ritual, either Hindu or Muslim, will you perform and believe in superstition of no kind, but only in the one God who is the Master and the Protector of all, the only Creator and Destroyer. In your new order, the lowest will rank equal with the highest and each will be to the other a *bhai* (brother). No pilgrimages for you any more, nor austerities but the pure life of the household, which you should be ready to sacrifice at the call of *dharma*. Women shall be equal of men in every way. No *purdah* (veil) for them any more, nor the burning alive of the widow on the pyre of her spouse. He who kills his daughter, the Khalsa shall not deal with him. Five K's you will observe as a pledge of your dedication to my ideal. You will wear your hair unshorn (*kes*) like the ancient sages of *kshatriyas* (warriors), a comb (*kangha*) to keep it clean, a steel bracelet (*kara*) to denote the universality of God, an underwear (*kachha*) to denote chastity, and a steel dagger (*Kirpan*) for your defence. Smoking being an unclean habit and injurious to health you will foreswear. You will love the weapons of war, be excellent horsemen, marksmen, and wielders of the sword, the discus, and the spear. Physical prowess will be as sacred to you as spiritual sensitiveness. And, between the Hindus and the Muslims, you will act as a bridge, and serve the poor without distinction of caste, colour, country or creed. My Khalsa shall always defend the poor, and *Deg* (community kitchen) will be as much an essential part of your order as *Teg* (the Sword). And, from now on, Sikh males will all call themselves 'Singh' (lion) and women 'Kaur' (prince) and greet each other with *Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa*, *Waheguru Ji Ki Fateh* (The Khalsa belongs to God; victory be to Him)."[177]

Acording to some contemporary *hukamnamahs* and *rehatnamahs*, codes of conduct, Guru Gobind Singh had ordained *keski*, a turban over *keshas*, holy hair. Since he had already made *keshas* essential for the Sikhs in 1695, it is plausible that now Guru Gobind Singh ordained his Sikhs to have a turban apart from *keshas* over their head.

The newswriter, reporting to the Emperor about the Guru's address and the day's proceedings, significantly wrote, "He has abolished caste and custom, old rituals, beliefs and superstitions of the Hindus and banded them in one single brotherhood. No one will be superior or inferior to another. Men of all castes have been made to eat out of the same bowl. Though orthodox men have opposed him, about twenty thousand men and women have taken baptism of steel at his hand on the first day. The Guru has also told the gathering: *I'll call myself Gobind Singh only if I can make the meek sparrows pounce upon the hawks and tear them; only if one combatant of my force faces a legion of the enemy*".[178]

In the words of Gokal Chand Narang, Hindus had religion but no national feeling while Guru Gobind Singh made nationalism the religion of the Khalsa.[179] In short, Guru Gobind Singh had emerged as a nation builder and the Sikhs had emerged as a nation in pre-modern times.[180]

The newswriter's report about opposition coming from orthodox circles referred to the bitter opposition from the hill chiefs. They were not willing to discard their existing religious

practises involving worship of idols, gods and goddesses; they were also not willing to discard their *varnashrm dharma*, the caste system. They passed jeering remarks at the men of lower castes consisting the bulk of Guru's Five Beloved Ones and those anxious to take to the baptism and join the Khalsa fold. It was in response to that, that Guru Gobind Singh uttered the last sentence of the newswriters report.

Within a few days, the number of people to whom baptism was administered reached 80,000. Groups of five started administering baptism to people all over the country.

Majha came under special dispensation of Bhai Mani Singh. At the instance of Guru Gobind Singh, he took over the administration ofHarimandir, Amritsar, in June 1699 after over six decades from Minas, who by now had completely identified themselves with Hinduism. As the Hindu position in Punjab at the time was apathetic, the successors ofHarji chose to move over to Rajputana. Bhai Mani Singh restored Sikh *maryada*, code of worship, in Harimandir and started touring the countryside and the surrounding areas in a major way for administering *pahul*, Khalsa baptism.

It was from the Baisakhi of 1699 that the hill chiefs became thirsty for Guru Gobind Singh's blood and resolved to destroy the Sikh Panth which they considered inimical to *varnashram dharma*. They resolved to try all avenues suggested to them by Kautilya's statecraft. Briefly, these were: weakening the movement from within; instigating people of other faiths against it; and involving it straightaway in an armed struggle with the forces of the state to retard its momentum, if not destroy it.

The post-Khalsa period of Guru Gobind Singh is to be seen in this light.

A couple of months after the embodiment of Khalsa when Guru Gobind Singh was hunting in Doon Valley, two hill chiefs Alim Chand and Balia Chand with a large contingent sought to ambush the Guru and his small hunting party. In the skirmishes that followed, Balia Chand was killed while Alim Chand lost his arm.

The hill chiefs, very much disappointed, decided to approach the Emperor through the Subedar of Sirhind. Their memorandum spoke of his establishing the new order of the Khalsa "which is contrary to all our cherished beliefs and customs" and went on to add, "He wants us to join hands with him to fight our Emperor against whom he harbours profound grudge. This we have refused to do, much to his annoyance and discomfiture. He is now gathering men and arms from all over the country to challenge the Mughal empire. We cannot restrain him, but loyal subjects of your Majesty, we seek your assistance to drive him out of Anandpur and not to allow grass to grow under your feet. Otherwise, he would become a formidable challenge to the whole empire, as *his intentions are to march soon upon Delhi itself*."[181]

The imperial authorities in Delhi saw through the wile of hill chiefs. Mohammad Qasim Lahori in *Ibrat Nama* terms them *ishab-i-gharz*, person who were moved by self interest. The authorities could offer the imperial troops on payment of their expenses. The hill chiefs agreed. The resultant expedition of 10, 000 imperial troops led by Painde Khan and Din Beg supplemented

by the forces of hill chiefs was routed by the Guru's forces on Savan Vadi 6, BK. 1757 (June 25, 1700).[182]

By end-August, the hill chiefs at first sought to storm Taragarh fort by surprise to demoralise the Sikhs. The resultant battle which lasted four days saw feats of rare heroism. Bachittar Singh pierced the wild elephant's armour which ran back to cause havoc in hill forces, while Udai Singh chopped the head of Raja Kesari Chand Jaswaria.[183]

The hill chiefs, thereafter, resorted to a startegem. On their swearing on cow and *yagyopavit* (sacred thread), Guru Gobind Singh agreed to withdraw from Anandgarh for some time to defuse the crises. He withdrew to Nirmohgarh hillock near Kiratpur, a few kilometres away.

Finding the Guru exposed in an open space, some of the hill chiefs led by Raja Ajmer Chand of Kahlur in early October laid a siege of the Nirmohgarh hillock. On their call, the Subeder of Sirhind sent a force under Rustam Khan a couple of days later. In the ensuing battle lasting two days, Rustam Khan and his brother Nasir Khan were killed. On invitation of Raja Salehi Chand of Basoli across Sutlej who had disagreed with his brother hill chiefs in breaking their vow, the Guru alongwith his forces crossed over to Basoli state. The purport of Ajmer Chand in expelling the Guru from his state had been achieved. Salehi Chand whose wife was the younger sister of Rani Pushpa, Ajmer Chand's mother, effected a reconciliation, and the Guru returned to Anandpur in another fortnight.[184]

Ajmer Chand was on look out for an opportunity to liquidate Guru Gobind Singh. The Guru visited Kurukshetra to propagate his mission to the extraordinary gathering at solar eclipse on 8 Magh BK. 1759 (January 1703). On his way back, at Ajmer Chand's instance. Syed Beg and AlifKhan, two army commanders, mounted a surprise attack on the Guru's entourage which included his three wives besides 125 *sowars*. They were beaten back.[185]

In another couple of months, a force led by Ajit Singh, eldest son of the Guru invaded Bassi Pathanan and- rescued Devki Das Brahmin's wife kidnapped by Sardar Jabar Jang Khan who was also brought as a prisoner to the Guru. He was duly punished.[186] The Brahmin chose to approach the Guru in the matter rather than the hill chiefs.

Ajmer Chand supported by Rajas of Handur and certain other hill chiefs mounted a surprise attack on Anandpur in December 1703 and again in March 1704.[187] These only led to skirmishes for a day each and were reflective of helplessness and bad faith on the part of hill chiefs. They had become rabid anti-Sikhs.

Raja Ajmer Chand now went to Deccan and personally presented a petition on behalf of the fraternity highlighting "the anti-state activities of the Guru's house for the last century" to Aurgangzeb. He pleaded that "the Guru, who had founded a new religion, wanted all Hindus to embrace it and to wage war on the Mughal Empire".[188] Alarmed at the grim picture painted by Ajmer Chand, Aurangzeb ordered the despatch of all available troops at Delhi, Sirhind and Lahore under the command of Wazir or Wajid Khan, Subedar of Sirhand. The hill chiefs too were to assist the Mughal forces.

Kautilya could not have done it better to bring to bear the whole might of the Mughal empire on the nascent Khalsa. It generated its own momentum of clash between the Sikhs and the Mughal authorities which went on for the next six decades or so. In the process, it gave a jolt both to the Mughal empire and the fundamentals of the Khalsa, to the benefit of the crafty caste-Hindus.

This led to the siege of Anandpur starting 5 Jeth BK. 1762 (May 3, 1705). It lasted for seven months till 5 Poh (December 4, 1705).

In response to besieger's continuous pleas to the Guru to vacate the fort of Anandpur in return for safe passage, the Guru sent rubbish covered by brocades, loaded over bullocks. In violation of the solemn oaths on the Qoran, the goods were looted. Ashamed at their sordid behaviour, the Mughal commanders now sent a message in the Emperor's name, expressing regret at the bahaviour of the imperial troops and reiterated the agreement on safe conduct if the Guru agreed to quit Anandpur. *Guru Kian Sakhian*, however, mentions that in reponse to the Guru's letter, a royal Qazi brought an imperial letter and verbal messages to Anandpur on 5 Poh BK 1762 (December. 4, 1705) giving solemn assurances of safe conduct, for the Guru to retire to Kangar in Malwa.[189]

Anyhow, Guru Gobind Singh left Anandpur the next day. The Mughal forces, forgetting all pledges, set out in hot pursuit. Skirmishes started from Kiratpur. On reaching Sirsa, the Guru, entrusted his mother and his two younger sons to a Sikh, to be taken to Delhi to join his wives there. On the way, they met Gangu or Ganga Dhar Kaul, a Kashmiri Brahmin, once an employee in the Guru's household. He took them instead to his village Saheri. He usurped the considerable cash and jewellery the Guru's mother had on her and betrayed them to the Khan ofMorinda who passed them on to Wazir Khan, Subedar of Sirhind.

Nawab Sher Mohamad Khan of Malerkotia was against the two small children of the Guru being put to harm as that was against Islam. Dewan Sucha Nand Bhandari Khatri was emittimg venom against the Guru and the Khalsa. On their refusal to accept Islam, the two younger sons of Guru Gobind Singh were tortured for four days before being bricked alive. Since the wall fell down when it reached their neck, their throats were slit on 13 Poh BK. 1762 (December 12, 1705). The Guru's mother died of shock on hearing the news.[190]

Earlier at Shahi Tibbi, Guru Gobind Singh entailed Bhai Udai Singh with 50 Sikhs to checkmate the pursuing hill chiefs forces. He sent Bachittar Singh with 100 men towards Ropar to stall the advancing Mughal forces.[191]

He himself reached the house of Nihang Khan at his Kotla and received warm welcome. He had the day's rest there and assisted by Nihang Khan's son Alam Khan reached Chamkaur the day after.

It were Nihang Khan and Pir Badruddin alias Buddhu Shah who made appropriate arrangement for Guru Gobind Singh's escape from Chamkaur.

At the Chamkaur mud fortress of Chaudhary Budhi Chand, the Guru had 40 Sikhs with him. They kept the pursuing forces of Malerkotia at bay during the day. By nightfall only half a dozen Sikhs were left: others including two of Guru's sons, Ajit Singh and Jujhar Singh had earned martyrdom.[192]

The five Sikhs, for the first time in Sikh history, now adopted the first *Gurmatta*, resolution, asking Guru Gobind Singh to make good his escape. He took along with him four of them - Bhai Daya Singh, Dharam Singh, Man Singh and Ram Singh. He put his dress and aigrette on Bhai Sant Singh who resembled him. Sangat Singh Bangeshri was the other left to meet martyrdom at Chamkaur the following day.[193]

The leading role in the escape of the Guru and his disciples from Chamkaur to Machhiwara was played by Ghani Khan and Nabi Khan, two brothers, residents of Machhiwara. They were *sipah salars*, commanding officers, of Malerkotia forces which had laid the siege of Chamkaur. They were the first cousins of Nihang Khan (sons of his father's sister). Arriving at the mud fortress at night, they passed on a *sipah solar's* dress to Guru Gobind Singh, who put it on and stepped down from the first floor of the fortres-s with the help of a spear. Before leaving. Guru Gobind Singh raised a cry, "The Guru of Sikhs is escaping, catch him". Alerted, that led to skirmishes amongst the Mughal forces. Ghani Khan and Nabi Khan performed the night journey with the Guru to Machhiwara. After making arrangements for his stay at night at the house of Gulaba, a former *Masand*, they took leave and returned to Ropar to join their forces.[194]

From Machhiwara, a group of five Muslims, two of them learned in Islamic theology took over. They were probably sent by Pir Badruddin alias Budhu Shah of Sadhaura for which later he along with his followers was tortured to death by the Mughal authorities.[195] These were, Qazi (Haji) Charagh Ali Shah Ajneria, who had his *murids*, disciples, in Malwa, Inayat Ali Noorpuria, Qazi Pir Muhamad Salowala, Subeg Shah Halwaria and Hussan Ali Mannu Majria.[196]

At Machhiwara the Guru replaced the *sipah salar's* blue dress by loose blue robes and advised his four Sikhs to move on to Haher in Malwa on their own in the blue dress. He sat on *charpoy*, an Indian bedstead, on 12 Poh BK. 1762 (December 11, 1705) to be carried by four Muslim devotees with Qazi Charagh Ali taking the fly whisker of Mayur feathers. Guru Gobind Singh was given out as *Uch ka pir*, meaning both the pir from Uch Sharif in Multan who was held in high esteem, and a high quality Pir. It was also stated that since the Pir was on fast he would not speak. Since those carrying the Guru on *charpoy* were genuine Muslims with two of them learned in Islamic theology, they were able to pass through the various stages of journey, where needed, after satisfying the curiosity of those on lookout for the Guru.

After various stages, the Guru arrived at Rai Kalha's place at Rai Kot on December 16, 1705. Nihang Khan's son Alam Khan who was Rai Kalha's son-in-law was already there to oversee the arrangements. Here the Guru heard about the martyrdom of his younger sons and of his mother. Rai Kalha sent a special messenger to Sirhind; he got the first hand information from Raja Todar Mal Kapoor who had performed the cremation of the three members of the Guru's family. Guru Gobind Singh thanked the Lord at his younger sons facing the ordeal successfully.

Guru Gobind Singh blessed Rai Kalha and preceded to Takhtpura where he relieved Haji Charagh Ali Shah and others to go their own way. He arrived at Dina where he wrote *Zafarnamah*, the epistle of victory, to Aurangzeb in December 1705 and sent the same to him through Bhai Daya Singh and Bhai Dharam Singh. They dressed themselves as *ahdias*, special revenue officers, and proceeded to the south.

Guru Gobind Singh cast off the blue dress at Dhilmi. He moved on to Talwandi and was at Rohi when a group of 40 Sikhs from Majha accompanied by Mata Bhag Kaur visited him to convey their condolences at the death of his four sons and his mother, and also to offer their services to effect a compromise between the Guru and the Mughal authorities.[197] The Guru put them on the defensive by narrating the series of Mughal atrocities from Guru Arjan's martyrdom through Guru Hargobind's incarceration for several years at Gwalior, Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom to the laying of the siege of Anandpur. Where were they, all this while? Were they not ashamed to talk the way they did?

Bhag Singh Jhabalia gave a lead that it was not within their means to carry forth their faith in the Guru. The Guru told them that he had not called them and they should write a disclaimer which was signed by another four, all from Jhabal. The rest of the 35 did not.[198]

The Guru at that moment got the information of advancement of Mughal forces in hot pursuit and he along with those accompanying him moved on to take their positions by the side of a mound.

It was at this stage that Mata Bhag Kaur put the 40 men from Majha to shame and told them that their action would be a disgrace to Majha. They would not be received with equanimity by the society including their families. It was her challenge that made the 40 to gird up their loins and face the oncoming Mughal force of the Nawab of Sirhind.

In the action on 30 Poh 1762 (December 29, 1705), besides the 40 Sikhs and Mata Bhag Kaur from Majha, Guru Gobind Singh and those accompanying him also participated. After a run of arrows and bullets, the fight generated to a sword fight. By sunset all the forty had been seriously injured or put to death. But the Mughal forces retreated.[199]

Of the Forty Sikhs, only three (Rai Singh, Sunder Singh and Mahan Singh) were in their last breath, while Bhag Kaur lay injured when Guru Gobind Singh blessed profusely those dead and reached those injured - none of whom had signed the disclaimer. Their only request to the Guru was to tear away the disclaimer. He did that and blessed them as *muktas*, the saved ones, whose cycle of birth and death was over. He also changed the name of Ishar Sar to Mukatsar in their honour.[200] The account of traditional Sikh historians to place the disclaimer by the Forty at Anandpur, and after days being rallied by Mata Bhag Kaur from their diverse places is riven with holes.

Guru Gobind Singh now moved on to Saboki Talwandi where he remained for over 9 months. Because of his *hukumnamahs*, the Baisakhi of 1706 was a grand affair when he adminstered baptism to about 1,25,000 persons from Malwa, Majha and Pothohar, as far as Kabul.

On hearing of lack of success by Bhai Daya Singh and Dharam Singh of meeting Aurangzeb, he despatched fresh instructions to them in July 1706. They were able to see Aurangzeb shortly after wards when the *Zafarnamah* was read over to him by his *Munshi*.[201]

The main points made by Guru Gobind Singh in the *Zafarnamah* were: One, he had been cheated out of Anandpur because of the false oaths sworn on the Qoran offered in the name ofAurangzeb by Bakshi, Qazi, etc, and he considered it lawful to resort to sword when all avenues of peace had failed; Two, it was incumbent on the Emperor to do justice, not to harm the innocent and reminded him of the vengeance of God; Three, he had suffered at the hands of the hill chiefs who were idol worshippers, whereas he was an idol breaker: that was the main cause of his problems with the hill chiefs; Four, the Emperor claimed himself to be the Caliph of the Prophet. When he meets the Prophet, he will tell him what sort of a Muslim Aurangzeb was; and Five, the emperor's pride in power could be matched by the infinite power of God to protect those He wants to.[202]

According to available accounts, Aurangzeb was full of remorse and stated that he had been kept in the dark. He wanted to make amends and despatched a letter written on the cover of Qoran inviting the Guru to see him.[203] Seized with penitence and self reproach, he wrote to his sons Tara Azam and Kam Bakhsh. "I know not who I am, where I shall go and what will happen to this sinner full of sins. My years have gone by profitless. God has been in my heart but my darkened eyes have recognised not His light. There is no hope for me in the future. When I have lost hope in myself, how can I have hope in others. I have greatly sinned and know not what torment awaits me (in the hereafter)."[204] According to *Ahkam-I-Alamgiri*, Aurangzeb made positive moves to conciliate the Guru.[205]

At Talwandi Sabo, renamed Damdama Sahib, Guru Gobind Singh busied himself in getting prepared in bulk copies of Adi Granth for distribution to Sikh *Sangats*. And, Swarup Singh (1791) mentions Guru Gobind Singh's holding an *Akhand Path*, continued recitation of Adi Granth, there.[206] Earlier at Damdama in Kiratpur Sahib, shortly after Guru Tegh Bhahadur's martyrdom, his hymns had been incorporated at appropriate places, under instructions of Guru Gobind Singh. Writers like Prof Sahib Singh and Khushwant Singh mention of existance of a couple of such volumes.[207]

According to some accounts, Guru Gobind Singh started for the south and on the way met Bhai Daya Singh who informed him of the invitation despatched by Aurangzeb who, however, died on February 21 1707. Prince Muazzam later known as Bahadur Shah started from Afghanistan and according to one account had a chance meeting with the Guru on the banks of Sutlej when he informed him of the death of his father. He also requested him for help in his fight with his younger brother, Tara Azam. Guru Gobind Singh despatched a detachment of 200 to 300 horses under Kuldipak Singh who participated in the battle ofJajau in June 1707 leading to Bahadur Shah's victory.[208]

Guru Gobind Singh shortly after the battle reached Agra, and was presented with gifts by Bahadur Shah for his contribution in his war against Tara Azam.

After a stay of a couple of months of rainy season at Agra, Bahadur Shah started for Rajputana and thereafter to the south. Guru Gobind Singh too followed suit, chalking out his own travel plans. The Sikh historians mention of his visiting the Dera ofDadu Ram Bairagi and his bowing his arrow at his *Samadh* to check the alacrity of the Sikhs. For that, the Guru was fined by the Khalsa under the leadership of Bhai Daya Singh. *Guru Kian Sakhian* mentions of a fine of Rs. 125.

Guru Gobind Singh on the way broached with Bahadur Shah the subject of punishment of Subedar of Sirhind for his excesses. He got the impression of Bahadur Shah's reluctance to do justice in this case. From Godavari, he, therefore, took a different course and reached Nander, the *dera* of Lachhman Dev or Madho Das Bairagi (whom he had earliar met at Haridwar) who was known for his occult powers. According to the contemporary *Amarnamah* (October 1708) of Nathmal, a Dhadi in the Darbar of Guru Gobind Singh, Madho Das was an Udasi Sikh. Madho Das submitted himself to the protection of the Guru, saying he was his *banda*, devotee.[209]

Madho Das was administered baptism by Guru Gobind Singh himself to the accompaniment of Bhai Daya Singh and three other Sikhs on September 3, 1708. He was renamed Banda Singh. Keeping in view the susceptibilities of Bairagi followers of Banda Singh, Guru Gobind Singh ordained that henceforth *Guru ka Langar* would cater to the people of all faiths: only vegetarian food shall be served in *langar*.

Guru Gobind Singh remained at Nander for over a month. He appointed Banda Singh on Kartik Sudi 3, BK. 1765 (October 5, 1708), Jathedar of Panth and, according to *Bhat Vehi Multani Sindhi*, attached to him five leading Sikhs Bawas Binod Singh and Kahan Singh and Bhais Bhagwant Singh, Koer Singh and Baz Singh to provide the corporate leadership to the Khalsa. The Guru also handed over to him a seal, five arrows from his quiver and the *nishan saheb*, flag pole.[210] Banda Singh accompanied by about 25 Sikhs left for the Punjab the same day with a brief, inter alia, to punish the Subedar of Sirhind, and uproot the oppressive Mughal rule.

The same evening, Guru Gobind Singh was visited by two Pathans. One of them was commissioned by Wazir Khan, Subedar of Sirhind, to assassinate Guru Gobind Singh. Wazir Khan was afraid of the ongoing talks between the Guru and Emperor Bahadur Shah who according to *Khalsa Namah* of Bakhat Mal had already issued a *firman*, imperial orders, upon Wazir Khan to pay Guru Gobind Singh a sum of Rupees 300 per day.

One of the Pathans, Bashal Beg kept a vigil outside the Guru's tent while Jamshed Khan the hired assassin stabbed the Guru twice. He was killed in one stroke by the Guru himself, while those outside alerted by the tumult killed the other.[211] According to some accounts, the other escaped.

The wound was sewn up the following day, inter alia, by an English Surgeon, named Cole.[212] Guru Gobind Singh, finding his end near, on Kartik Sudi 4, BK 1765 (October 5, 1708), according to *Bhat Vehi Talunda Pargana Jind* and *Bhat Vahi Bhadson*, *Pargana Thanesar* passed on the spiritual. Guruship to the Adi Granth,[213] and transferred the corporate Guruship to the Khalsa.[214] Mata Sahib Devan, who was close by was given the title of being the mother of the Khalsa.

Guru Gobind Singh breathed his last the following day (Kartik Sudi 5) during the night of October 7-8, and his mortal remains were consigned to flames by, inter alia, Bhai Daya Singh by the following dawn. *Guru Kian Sakhian* affirms that *Path* (complete recitation of Guru Granth Sahib) was organised. The *bhog* ceremony was performed on Kartik Sudi 14, Bk. 1765 (October 17, 1708).[215] The stories about the healing of the Guru's wound and his trying a bow which ripped it open are not based on facts. So also are the stories about the Guru's asking the Sikhs not to enter the enclosure or search in his last remains, and of his lighting the fire on his breathing his last by spiritual powers. Though fanciful, these are motivated and untrue.

Bahadur Shah's conferring of a *khillat*, robe of honour, on Jamshed Khan as per entry in *Akhbarat-Darbar-i-Mualla* of October 28, 1708, and two days later a robe of honour on Guru Gobind Singh's family, showed that he, surprisingly, treated the assailant and the victim at par. It also lends credence to the theory that Bahadur Shah too, apart from the Subedar of Sirhind was involved in the surreptitious attack on the Guru.[216]

It is truism to say that during his victories in various battles especially against the hill chiefs. Guru Gobind Singh did not occupy an inch of territory. But throughout his life, he was not oblivious of importance of political power as a catalyst of social change. Over a decade before the creation of the Khalsa, while completing *Krishna Avatar*, he had enunciated the doctrine that "Without political power, *dharma* (the rule of law) can not be established; and without *dharma* the society was an admixture of scum", or "Religion without political freedoms and diginity was an abject slavery, and politics without religious morality was an organised barbarism." Political power, as such, was a means to attain the objectives viz., "to uphold the saints and destroy the wicked."

Guru Gobind Singh was overwhelmed by the response he got from all sections of society particularly the lower ones in the creation of Khalsa - an end product of over 200 years of endeavours of the Sikh Gurus. That was right upto his expectations. Already, the living spirit of the Guru had widened the horizon of their mind, and now the boon of baptism with emphasis on the plying of the sword to uphold the righteousness, changed the physical characteristics of the Khalsa. In his talks with Bhai Nand Lal, Guru Gobind Singh spelled out his resolve to confer the rulership of the land on these downtrodden people.

Bhai Nand Lal's minutes in his *Tankhah Nama* summed up in IheJitany *raj karesa khalsa*, Khalsa shall rule, inspired the Khalsa to new heights, and set the guidelines for the post-Khalsa period. The *Amarnamah* (October 1708) ofNathmal Dhadi also vouchsafes that the "Sikh have been granted sovereignty of both the worlds, and must retain high spirits under all circumstances."

The Khalsa, in short, was an embodiment of humankind - an integrated product of men from all castes, including the downcastes and outcastes. Ethnic equality constituted the core of the brotherhood of the Khalsa. The Khalsa had three distinct characteristics, to be physicaly distinct, mentally alert and spritually enlightened. The Khalsa had the team spirit, *espirit de corps*. The Khalsa spirit was harnessed in the service of man, society and state. The Khalsa was fully alive to the social needs to protect the human rights of the weak and the deprived. He was committed to oppose and halt the progress of tyranny and oppression of a person or state, and eradicate the evil. The Khalsa was a householder and yet a saint. The Khalsa was a soldier to uphold the values he held dear. The

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concept of the Khalsa was based on martyrdom. Therefore, the Khalsa was not afraid to die for worthy causes. Since the Khalsa upheld the social values, it constituted a revolutionary force.

Footnotes:

1. Sangat Singh, Japji: Quintessence of Sikh Thought and Philosophy, (1973) pp. 41-53.
2. Bhai Jodh Singh, "Teachings of Guru Nanak" in Gurmukh Nihal Singh (Gen. Editor), Guru Nanak: His Life, Time and Teachings, (Delhi, 1969), p. 5.
3. Max Arthur Macauliffe, The Sikh Religion, (Oxford, 1909), Vol.1., p. 35; also p. 195.
4. B.N. Luma, Evolution of Indian Culture, (Agra, 1970), p. 38l.
5. A.L.Srivastava, *History of India*. 1000-1707, (Agra, 1964), p. 310.
6. It was this process of discourse within Hindisum that gave birth to Bhakti movement in various parts of India. The Hindu society's closing itself behind *Varna Ashram Dharma* had left the Sudras and the outcastes unprotected. The Bhakti movement broadly produced Bhakts or Saints from lower classes who sought to initiate the process of inner reformation by asserting the futility of the caste system.
7. With the mass scale conversion of the Buddhist laity and later of sections of the Hindus to Islam, there arose third or fourth generation Muslims of Indian origin who sought equality with Turks/Aghans. But the immigrant Muslims' class values were affected by Brahminical hierachy and they treated the Indian Muslims as an inferior class, inter alia, introducing new strains in Islamic theology.
8. Cf. Sunita Puri, "Socio-Political Content of the Teachings of Guru Nanak" in *Studies in Sikhism and Contemporry Religion*, New Delhi Vol VII (1 & 2), April-October 1988, p. 17.
9. Bhairau Mahia (hereinafter M.) 5, 3(5), *Adi Sri Guru Granth Sahib* (hereinafter *A.G.*), p. 1136.
10. Ramkali, Sidh, Goshati, 44, *A.G.*, p. 943.
11. Ibid, 18, *A.G.*, p. 939.
12. Cf. Ganda Singh, "Guru Nanak at Puri with Sri Chaitanya and His followers" in Ganda, Singh (Ed) *Sources on the Life and Teachings of Guru Nanak*, Patiala, *Punjab Past and Present* (Hereinafter *PP&P*), Vol III, 1969. pp. 334-39; also The *Sikh Review* Calcutta Vol XVIII, Guru Nanak Fifth Centenary Number, October-November 1969, pp. 58-61. There is also mention of Guru Nanak's campanion Mardana.
13. Saddhamangala Karunaratna, "Guru Nanak Visited Ceylon", The *Sikh Review*, Vol. XVI (195), October-November 1969, pp. 84-85.
14. For photofacimile of inscription at Baghdad see. Ibid, opposite p. 122; also, W.H. McLeod, *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion*, (Oxford, 1968), p. 131-32. Dr. V.L. Menage, Reader in Turkish at School of Oriental Studies, London, who was commissioned by McLeod admits his lack of knowledge of the Turkman language used in the inscription. Nonetheless, he proceeds to translate the same. He concedes that first six or seven syllables in the second line read Baba Nanak Faqir or Baba Nanak-i-Faqir but says that this does not fit into the meter and should be ignored. That suited very well McLeod's thesis that Guru Nanak did not travel outside his surroundings. To ignore the inscription because it does not fit into one's contrived thesis, amounts to intellectual dishonesty.
15. Shaikh Jalal al Hanafi, Imam, Juma-e-Khulfa (Caliph's Mosque), the oldest mosque in Baghdad, in several conversations with the author, who was First Secretary in the Indian Embassy in Baghdad during 1989-90. The 76 years old Shaikh Hanafi who sometimes was Imam ofJuma Mosque in Shanghai in China, is a renowned authority on Baghdad! folklore.

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According to the testimony of Bhai Gurdas, Guru Nanak at Baghdad had not only talked about hundreds of thousands of upper and nether regions, but also taken the young son ofPir Dastgir (the then successor of the Dastgir's shrine) to a heavenly voyage through his cosmic powers and shown him the regions. In one of the regions, the young boy, probably Zainuddin, successor to the shrine and First Ashraf who died in 981 A.H. at a ripe old age, was served *prasad* which he had with him on coming back from the voyage, as an evidence of what he had experienced.

Guru Nanak at Baghdad blessed the wife of the governor with a son. Soon she got pregnant. The Governor, in thanksgiving, conferred on Guru Nanak a Baghdad! *Choga*, flowing dress, with verses from Qoran on it (also known as Qoranic *Choga*) on Guru Nanak. This *Choga* is presently at Dera Baba Nanak in Punjab.

The Qoranic verses have since been tampered with because of the impetuous actions of Bedi custodians of the shrine. They have got these rewritten by some Qadianis who contend that Guru Nanak was a muslim.

It was customary for Baghdad! rulers to confer Qoranic Chogas in high appreciation. Another such Qoranic Choga conferred by the ruler of Iraq on Shaikh Badiuddin Shahmadari is available at Manakpur near Kanpur.

16. Var Malar M. 1, 25(2), *A.G.*, pp. 1289-90.
17. Bhai Gurdas, *varn avarn ik karaya*,
18. Sri Rag M. 1, 3(4), *A.G.* p. 15.
19. Sri Rag M. 1, 22(2), AG., p. 1288.
20. Asa M. 1, 39, *A.G.* p. 360; Asa Ashtapadis, 11-12, A.G., pp. 417-18 and Tilang M. 1, 5, *A.G.* pp. 22-23.
21. Cf. Surjit Hans, *A Reconstruction of Sikh History from Sikh Literature*, (Jalandhar, 1988), p. 21.
22. Maru M. 1, 9(1), *A.G.*, p. 1028.
23. Asa M. 1, 39 (Pause), *A.G.*, p. 360.
24. Salok Varan te Vadheek, 20, A.G., p. 1412.
25. Rag Majh, Salok M. 1, 15(1), *A.G.*, pp. 144-45.
26. Wadhans M. 1, elegies, (2(3), *A.G.*, pp. 579-80.
27. Ibid: also Rag Majh, Salok M. 1, 10(1) *A.G.*, p. 142.
28. Sri Rag M. 1, 14(5)., *A.G.*, p. 62.
29. Trilochan Singh, "Guru Nanak's Religion: A Comparative Study of Religions" in Gurmukh Nihal Singh, n. 2, p. 97.
30. Guru Nanak wrolc an acrostic on the basis of 35 Gunnukhi alphabets.For instance, letter V was added to the script to represent sound bclwcn hard 'd' and 'r'. Devnagri and Persian scripts later made provision for this sound. Guriiinukhi also reminded the people of Guru's mouth, or Guru's word and Gurmukh, guru oriented Kabir's acrostic based on Gurmukhi characters which finds place in A.G., pp.360-63 and also in Kabir Bajak does not use the alphabet V.
31. Gujri Ashtpadis, 4, A.G., p. 504.
32. Cf. W.H. McLeod, *Evolution of Sikh Community* (Oxford, 1975), ad passim. It is product of McLeod's malefic mind and never came' up earlier in Sikh history.
33. Coronation Ode by Satta and Balwand, A.G., pp.966-68. See also Swaye Mahle Pahle Ke, (A.G. pp. 13 89-90) for Guru Nanak's establishing *raj* and *Jog.*

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34. Ibid.
35. Var Majh, Salok M. 2, 22(1), A.G., p.148.
36. It is another mater that this biography had been lost. What goes by the name of Bhai Bala *Janamsakhi* was prepared much later.
37. Dr. Balbir Singh, "Date of visit of Guru Amar Das to Kurukshetra", PP&P. Vol XIII, October 1979, pp. 441-44.
38. Guru Ram Das later recorded a hymn which recapitulates Guru Amar Das's visit to Kurkshetra, Jumna and Haridwar. Rag Tukhari M.4, AG., pp. 1116-17. Bhai Jetha was a member of the *sangat* accompanying Guru Amar Das.
39. Gauri Bairagan M.3, 1(1), *A.G.*, p. 62.
40. Bhai Santokh Singh in *Gurpratap Surajgranth*, quoted in Bhai Jodh Singh, "Guru Amar Das Ji", *PP&P*, XIII, October 1979, p. 272.
41. RagTukhari M. 4, 4, *A.G.* 1116-17.
42. M.A. Macauliffe, n. 3, Vol. II, p. 185. Also Sarup Das Bhalla, *Mehma Parkash* (1773), Gobind Singh Lamba (ed) Bhasha Vibhag Punjab, Patiala, 1971, Vol. II, pp 134 -35. 160-61. 188-93.
43. Ibid. This exposition of humanism did influence Akbar in evolving Din-i-Ilahi, God's Religion, for all men. Cf. Ishwari Prasad, *A Short History of the Muslim Rule in India* (Delhi, 1970), Vol. II, pp. 366-68.
44. Guru Ram Das later composed the thanks-giving hymn," He maketh the whole world bow at the feet of those whom He himself maketh great." Var Rag Gauri M.4, Salok 14, *A.G.*, p. 314.
45. Var Sorath M. 4, 17(2) *A.G.*, p. 649.
46. There has been some controversy about location of various *Manjis*. For various lists, see PP&P, Vol. XIII, pp. 319, 467-68.
47. It was later represented that a recitation of *Japji* with a bath from the water of Baoli at each step would lead to salvation from 84 lakh existences, mentioned in Indian religious traditions.
48. Sri Rag, Ashtpadi 5, *A.G.*, p. 97.
49. Var Vadhans M. 4, 21(1), *A.G.*, p. 594.
50. Sri Rag M 4, 11(3) *A.G.*, p. 30.
51. Var Sorath, Salok M.4, 149(1), AG., pp. 647-48.
52. Cf. Surjit Hans, n. 21, p. 63.
53. Ramkali, Sadd, *A.G.*, pp. 923-24.
54. Var Gauri, Salok M.4, 10(2), *A.G.*, pp. 305-06.
55. Rag Suhi M. 4, Chhant, *A.G.*, 773-74.
56. Cf. Surjit Hans, n. 21, pp. 95, 102, 104.
57. Ibid, pp. 110-11.
58. Ibid, p. 105.
59. It was this authenticated copy of Japji that was later used by Guru Arjan while compiling the *Adi Granth*. The contents of old manuscripts of recensions of Adi Granth, including the one available at Kartarpur, read, "Japu - copied from original which had the signatures of Guru Ram Das on it."
60. Hans, n. 21. p. 101, 111; also A.G., pp. 164, 172, 312, 562, 698 & 1265.
61. Hans, p.103.
62. Suhi M.4, 8(3), A.G. p. 733.

63. Surjit Singh Gandhi, *History of the Sikh Gurus* (Jalandhar, 1978), p. 211; Var Gauri M 4: Salok 14(1), A.G., p. 213.
64. Sarang M.4, ghar 3, dupada, *A.G.*, p. 1200.
65. Suhi M. 4, 9(4), *A.G.*, p. 733.
66. The first three successors of Guru Nanak were at various stages of their life at the time of his passing away in 1539.
67. Rattan Singh Bhangu in *Panth Parkash* relates a popular tradition that power and pelf of the world kept 12 *kos* (30 kms) from Guru Nanak and six *kos* from Guru Angad. It knocked at the door of Guru Amar Das and fell at the feet of Guru Ram Das, while in Guru Arjan's time it got admission into the house.

    The fable beautifully describes the gradual evolution of the social and political power of the Sikhs. Cf. Gokal Chand Narang, *Transformation of Sikhism*, (Delhi, 1989 ed), p. 44.
68. The idea was extant in Guru Amar Das's time, but took concrete shape under Guru Arjan Dev.
69. Gauri M. 5, 99, *A.G.*, p. 199.
70. Bilawal M. 5, 104, *A.G.*, p. 825. According to Muslim belief one, who is burnt to death, goes to hell.
71. For a bio-sketch, see Dr. Surinder Singh, "The Life and Times of Miyan Mir, ", *PP&P*, Vol. XXII, October 1986, pp. 243-72. There are assertions by some scholars that the foundation stone was laid by Guru Arjan himself.
72. This made Prithia to construct a corresponding centre at Haher, wherefrom his wife came.
73. Cf. Hari Ram Gupta, *History of the Sikhs*, Vol, I, *The Sikh Gurus*, 1469-1708, (Delhi, 1984), p. 134. It was during this visit, Akbar looked into the complaints about the Guru's *bani* being tinged with anti-Muslim or anti-Prophet expressions.
74. Ibid, p. 135.
75. It included hymns of Guru Arjan and his predecessors, *Rababis* and Bhatts associated with various Gurus, and Bhaktas both Muslims and Hindus, including Shudras and Outcastes from different parts of Hindustan.

    The hymns in *Adi Granth* were arranged according to *Ragas*, musical meters and their sub-meters. This resulted in intermixture of the hymns of all the Gurus in a particular Raga. Then followed the hymns of Bhaktas beginning with those of Kabir and ending with those of Farid. At places there was interspersing of hymns of Gurus and Bhaktas. It was an integrated compilation which gave equal importance to each contributor.
76. Khwaja Mohamad Baqi Billa (1564-1603) arrived in India by close of the 16th century, and established new Sufi order which advocated the use of state power for Islamic preaching.
77. Ganda Singh, "The Martyrdom of Guru Arjan", *PP&P*. Vol. XII, April 1978, P. 163.
78. Ibid, p. 171.
79. Narang, n. 67, p. 46.
80. Ganda Singh, n. 77, p. 160.
81. Bhai Vir Singh while editing *Gurprtap Suraj Granth* (pp. 1189-92), holds a prolonged discussions and comes to the conclusion that Khusrau never called on Guru Arjan, and rather it was the work of Guru Arjan's opponents, including Prithi Chand, Brahmins and high caste Hindus and Maulvis. Cf. Narang, n. 67, p. 48.
82. Ganda Singh, n. 77, p.165.

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83. In the very next item in *Tuzuk*, Jahangir mentions of cases of Raju and Amba, one of whom was fined Rupees, 1,15,000. This caused some confusion about Guru Arjan being fined. Ibid, p. 175; also Gopal Singh, *A History of the Sikh People*, 1469-1988, (Delhi, 1988), pp. 194-95 for Jesuit Letter of 1606-07 published in Lisbon in 1609.
84. Ganda Singh, n. 77, pp. 169-70.
85. Ibid, p. 172. It may be mentioned that Sikh traditional accounts mention of Chandu, a Divan as the main tormentor. They were not aware of *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri's* mentioning of Guru Arjan which came to light only in 1931, or of the Naqshbandi order.
86. To attribute Guru Hargobind's wearing of two swords to an accident of Bhai Buddha's putting the sword on the wrong side, is to betray ignorance of Guru Hargobind's scheme of things, or Baba Buddha's adeptness in the art of warfare.
87. Piara Singh Padam and Giani Garja Singh (Eds), *Guru Kian Sakhian* by Swarup Singh Kaushik (1790) (Patiala, 1986), p.26 for text of Bhat Vehi entry. Bhai Sain Das's wife Ramo and Damodri were sisters. Both Ramo and Sain Das were devout Sikhs of Guru Arjan.
88. Ibid.
89. Ibid for text.
90. Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha, *Mahan Kosh or Encyclopaedia of Sikhism* (Delhi, 1990 reprint): entry under Dagru and Daroli, pp. 557-58; see also under Bhai Rupa. Guru Hari Rai later got constructed a shrine at the site of *Diwan* of Guru Hargobind at Daroli.
91. Jahangir, Emperor, *Tuzak-i-Jahangin* (Memoirs of Jahangir), Alexander Rogers (Tr), Henry Beveridge (Ed), (hereinafter referred to as *Tuzak*). Vol. I, p. 96.
92. Kavi Sohan's *Gurbilas Patshahi* 6, says that complaint against Guru Hargobind was made six years after Guru Arjan's martyrdom (p. 161) and that Guru Hargobind started for Delhi on *Magh thiti* 4, corresponding to 2 Magh (p. 163). both these dates, according to Dewan Bahadur Swaminathan Pillai's *Indian Chronology*, BC 1 to A.D. 2000 (1911) (Delhi, 1985 reprint) fall together in Samat 1669, corresponding to December 31, 1612.

    The author is thankful to Mr. D.R. Narang of Malcha Marg, New Delhi, for working for him this date.
93. Tuzak, n. 91, Vol I, p. 249, and ad passim.
94. Ibid, Vol. II, p. 155.
95. Precisely, about Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi, Jahangir wrote in his Memoirs... "it was reported to me that a *shayyad* (a loud talker, a cheat) of the name of Shaikh Ahmad had spread the net of hypocrisy and deceit in Sirhind, and caught in it many of the apparent worshippers without spirituality, and had sent into every city and country one of his disciples, whom he called his deputy (Khalifa), and whom he considered more skilled than others in the adorning of shops (of deceit) and selling of religious knowledge, and in deceiving men. He had also written a number of idle tales to his disciples and his believers, and had made them into a book which he called *Maktubat* (letters). In that album (*Jung*) of absurdities many unprofitable things had been written that drag (people) into infidelity and impiety... I accordingly gave an order that they should bring him to the Court that is based on justice. According to orders, he came to pay his respects. To all that I asked him he could give no resonable answers and appeared to me to be extremly proud and self-satisfied, with all his ignorance. I considered the best thing for him would be that he should remain in the prison of correction until the heat of his temperament and confusion of his brain were somewhat quenched, and the excitement of the people should also subside. He was accordingly handed over to Anira'i Singh Dalan to be imprisoned in Gwalior fort. Ibid, Vol II, pp. 91-93.

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He was released after about a year.

96. Padam and Garja Singh, n. 87, p. 27. It is obvious that this entry was based on the information supplied by Naik Hari Ram of Barhtian whose family was patron of these Bhats.

97. *Bhat Vehi Talunda*, *Pargna Jind*. quoted in Ibid. The transcription has two mistakes. Firstly, it erroneously mentions Narnaul in Pargana Batala which should be Kalanaur in Pargana Batala. Since both these words have same number of strokes in *Takre* in which BhatVehis are written, this is quite understandable. Secondly, after the first sentence, the next sentence has been split into two by putting a fullstop inbetween, tendering an incorrect reading that Guru Hargobind was released on Phagun 1, *Sangrand*, 1676 (end January 1620).

98. Tuzak, n. 91, Vol II. pp. 114-17.

99. Jahangir wrote in his Memoirs: "As it was reported to me that in Lahore one Miyan Sheikh Muhammad Mir by name, who was a *Darvish*, a Sindhi by origin, very eloquent, virtuous, austere, of auspicious temperament, a lord of ecstacy, had seated himself in the corner of reliance upon God and retirement, and was rich in his poverty and independent of the World, my truth seeking mind was not at rest without meeting him, and my desire to see him increased. As it was impossible to go to Lahore, I wrote to him and explained to him the desire of my heart, and that Saint, notwithstanding his great age and weakness, took the trouble to come. I sat with him for a long time alone, and enjoyed a thorough interview with him. Truely he is a noble personage, and in this age he is a great gain and a delightful existence... Although I desired to make him some gift, I found that his spirit was too high for this, and so did not express my wish. I left him the skin of a white antelope to pray upon, and he immediately bade me farewell and went back to Lahore". Ibid, Vol. II, p. 119.

100. Kaulan or Kumarawan or Kamla was a Khatri girl. Her father was got murdered by Qazi Rustam Khan of Mujang, Lahore, who took her mother into his harem. She also accompanied her mother as a child. Both Kaulan and her mother were followers of Hazrat Mian Mir. Now with the passage of time, Kaulan had grown up and the Qazi wanted her too to enter his harem. Her mother requested Mian Mir for protection. It was under these circumstances that a disciple of Hazrat Mian Mir escorted Kaulan on May 21, 1621, to Guru Hargobind to offer her the protection she needed. According to some accounts Guru Hargobind named the tank *Kaulsar* after her. She died in 1629.

100a. He claimed himself to be the Guru , with Meharban and Harji succeeding him as seventh and eigth Gurus.

101. Nanaki gave birth to a son Tyag Mal later called Guru Tegh Bahadur on October 18, 1621, and a daughter Viro on July 11, 1626. Mehrai gave birth to two sons, Suraj Mal on September 5, 1623, and Ani Rai on February 6, 1626, while Damodari who already had a son Baba Gurditta, gave brith to another son Ani Rai on October 24, 1623. Guru Hargobind did not have any child from any of his three wives after 1626 when he was 36 years of age. Cf. Randhir Singh, *Guru Parnalian*, Amritsar, Sikh Itihas Research Board, Shiromani Gurudwara Parbandhak Committee), pp. 283-85.

102. Bhai Kahan Singh, n. 90, n. 251.

103. Padam andGarja Singh, n. 87, pp. 28-29. From the large number of casualties on the Guru's side, it was obvious that Karam Chand and Rattan Chand were either a success in making surprise attack or they were better equipped than Guru Hargobind's bodyguard.

104. Kahan Singh, n. 90, p. 332; also p. 881 entry under Buddhan Shah.

105. J.N. Sarkar, *A Short History ofAurangzeb*, (Calcutta, 1916), p.156: quoted in Gandhi, n. 63 p. 309.

106. Text in Padam and Garja Singh, (Eds), n. 87, p. 29.

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107. The Sikh chroniclers weave the story of Bidhi Chand's recovery of two horses brought for the Guru by the Sikhs of Kabul, and seized by the Mughal authorities and kept in Lahore Fort, between the periods of two conflicts, as the provocation. The timing of Bidhi Chand's exploits does not seem to be correct, nor are the dates of various battles mentioned by them.
108. Bhat Vehi Multani Sindhi in n. 87, p. 29.
109. Muhammad Latif, *History of the Punjab*, (1891), (Delhi, 1989 reprint) p. 256.
110. Bhat Vehi Multani Sindhi, in n. 87, p. 30. In this battle Guru's son Tyag Mal, then under 14, showed adptness in plying of the sword. That earned him the name of Tegh Bahadur.
111. Ibid.
112. Those who contend that Guru Arjan Dev gave the Sikhs their headquarters 'n Harimandir in Amritsar, should ponder as to what happened in Sikh history for over six decades from 1635.
113. Bhat Vehi Talaunds, Pargna Jind, n. 87, p. 36.
114. Ibid, p. 37.
115. Baba Sri Chand in closing stages of his long life regretted his misunderstanding of the concept of succession followed by his father and brought about the merger of Udasis into Sikhism. Except that they were celibate, they followed Sikhism in all respects.
116. These were subsequently supplemented by six *Bakshishes*, bounties under Guru Hari Rai, Guru Tegh Bahadur and Guru Gobind Singh. Precisely, these were *suthreshahi*, *Sangat Sahibie*, and *Bhagat Bhag-wanie* by Guru Hari Rai, *Mihan Shahie* by Guru Tegh Bahadur, and *Jit Malie* and *Bakht MaUe* apart from reinforcing Sangat Shahie under Guru Gobind Singh. Kahan Singh, n. 90, p, 9. On the creation of Khalsa, Guru Gobind Singh wanted all of them to go in for baptism ceremony. Taking advantage of the disturbed conditions they pleaded for time, and came to be known as Sahajdharis. They performed an admirable task in 18th century in managing Sikh shrines when Khalsa was being hunted. But in the 19th century, they slunked back to Hindu fold and had to be ousted from Gurdwara management sometimes with great effort during the Gurdwara Reform Movement in 1920s.
117. Some such chroniclers have woven fanciful stories of seven or eight marriages of Guru Hari Rai - seven sisters including Sulakhni which would make the age of the youngest one to be two years, or four sisters and their four maids. That only reflects the pitfalls to which one can fall.

    According to Swarup Singh Kaushik's *Guru Kian Sakhian* (n.87), Sakhi 5, all the three children of Guru Har Rai were born of Sulakhani. Those being. Ram Rai (March 1646), Roop Kaur (April 1649), and Hari Krishan (July 1652), Cf.n. 87, pp. 38-39.
118. *Dabistan-i-Mazhaib* writing about *nanak-prasths* says, The Guru believes in one God. his followers put not their faith in idol worship. They never pray or practice austerities like the Hindus. They believe not in their incarnations, or places of pilgrimage, nor the Sanskrit language which the Hindus deem to be the language of gods. They believe that all the Gurus are the same as Nanak... The Sikhs under all the Gurus have increased so much that even in the days of Guru Arjan, one or more representatives of Sikh religion could be found in every Indian city. To such an extent was caste disregarded that the Brahmins became the disciples of the Sikh Khatris, for none of the Gurus was a Brahmin. And Khatris paid homagee to the Jat masands who were a low section of the Vaishnavs. Guru Hargobind. (also) gained a large following at Kiratpur. He kept 900 horses in his stables and always entertained three hundred horsemen and sixty gunners (artillery men)."

    At places, however, *Dabistan* turns garrulous.
119. Bhai Gurdas died in 1637 and Bidhi Chand and Baba Gurditta in 1638.
120. Gandhi, n. 63, p. 331.
121. Cf. Trilochan Singh, *Life of Guru Hari Krishan*, (Delhi, 1981), p. 53.

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122. He was also given a recension ofAdi Granth. It was available in Ram Rai's headquarters in DehraDuntill 1964-65, when it was passed onto Singh Sabha Gurdwara, Dehra Dun.
123. The hymn reads: "The clay of Muslim's grave falls into potter's clod; vessels and bricks are fashioned therefrom. They cry out as they burn." Ram Rai substituted the word *beiman* (faithless) in place ofMusalman and interpreted that the clay of faithless Muslims will burn in the fires of hell.

Burning in potter's clod and fires of hell were two different things.

124. *Guru Kian Sakhian*, n. 87, p. 45.
125. Text in Ibid, p. 46. According to *Guru Kian Sakhian*, on his showing persistent repentence, he was called back to Kiratpur shortly afterwards. But this is not supported by traditional Sikh chroniclers.
126. The traditional Sikh chroniclers don't give any cause for the death of Guru Hari Rai at the young age of 31. Ajit Singh Bagha, using some Tibetan sources and epitaphic inscriptions in the premises of Ram Rai's monument at Dehra Dun has come to the conclusions that poison was administered to Guru Har Rai at the instance of Aurangzeb who had a grudge against him for speaking so highly of Dara Shukoh Cf. Gandhi, n. 63, p. 337.
127. Aurangzeb had just returned from Kashmir after a stay of over a year for health reasons.
128. Chhaju Ram was sent as preacher to Jagannath Puri. His son Himmat was one of the five beloved one to offer their head to Guru Gobind Singh.
129. According to an entry in Bhat Vehi Talaunda, Pargana Jind(account of Jalahna Puars), Guru Hari Krishan visited Aurangzeb's Court on Thursday, Chet Sudi 9 (should be 8: there seems some mistake in copying or printing) BK. 1721 corresponding to March 24, 1664. He was accompanied by Ram Rai, Diwan Dargha Mal son of Dwarka Das Chhibar, Kanwar Ram Singh son of Raja Jai Singh, Gurbakhash son of Bagha, calico printer, and Mani Ram Jalahna.

It is obvious that this entry was made at the instance of Mani Ram Jalahna, later known as Bhai Mani Singh. Cf. *Guru Kian Sakhian*, n. 87, p. 58.

130. Guru Hari Krishan was cremated the following day at the site on Jumna where he had held diwan for some time. According to an entry in Panda Vehi his *phul*, last remains, were taken to Haridwar by Ram Rai who was accompanied by his mother Sulakhni and Diwan Dargha Mal Chhibar. There is a corresponding entry in Bhat Vehi Talaunda of his ashes being taken to Kiratpur. Cf. for both the entries, n. 87, pp. 59-60.

Bhai Santokh Singh in *Suraj Granth*, Ras 10, Ansu 55, was misled into believing that no bones were found in the last remains of Guru Hari Krishan's body. The traditional Sikh chroniclers have been chary of mentioning of Ram Rai because of Guru Gobind Singh's injunction, on creation of Khalsa, not to have any interaction, inter alia, with Ram Rai'as, but at personal level he had best of relations with both Ram Rai and his widow Punjab Kaur whom he helped considerably to chastise the recalcitrant Mahants led by Gurbakhsh who was at the root of all the troubles.

131. Swarup Singh, in Ibid, pp. 60-61. He mentions of presence of Ram Rai along with his masand Gurdas from Garhwal. Ram Rai was not among the 22 pretenders at Bakala. He had obtained from Aurangzeb grant of 7 villages in Doon valley and set up his Dera, centre, there.
132. Bhat Vehi Tomar Binjiaton Ki reproduced in Ibid, p. 61. Makhan Shah had vowed to offer 100 gold mohars to the successor of Guru Nanak, for helping him take his boat caught in whirlpool to safety. He reached Bakala and offered five Mohars to Dhirmal. Thereafter, he came to Guru Tegh Bahadur and presented him five Gold Mohars. Guru Tegh Bahadur told him that his son was carrying 100 Gold Mohars consecrated to him, which he should present.

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133. A portrait of Guru Tegh Bahadur prepared by the artist to Governor of Dacca shows him wearing *kalgi*, aigrette, and having the hawk.
134. Cf. Trilochan Singh, *Guru Tegh Bahadur*, *A Biography*, (Delhi, 1967) pp. 267-68.
135. According to Bhat Vehi Jodobansian(account of Barhtias), Guru Tegh Bahadur was accompanied by Diwan Mati Das and his brother Sati Das, sons of Hira Nand Chhibar, Gual Das son of Chhutta Mal Chhibar, Gurdas son ofKirat Barhtia, Sangat son ofBina Uppal, Jetha and Dayal Das sons of Mai Das Jalahana Balaunt, and other Sikh faqirs. Swarup Singh, n. 87, pp. 67-68.
136. Trilochan Singh, n. 134, p. 326 f.n. 12.
137. Swarup Singh, n. 87, pp. 67-68 mentions the period of detention of lunar two months and three days. That must have included the period of his being taken into custody at Dhamdhan.
138. Surjit Hans, n. 21, p. 222. He makes the observation without identifying the audience.
139. Rattan Rai later repaired to Anandpur with costly gifts including a trained elephant for Guru Gobind Singh.
140. According to Bhat Vehi Multani Sindhi, they arived at Lakhaur on Asu Vadi 9, Bk. 1727 (August 29, 1670). The entourage consisted of Gobind Das, his mother Gujri and her brother Kirpal Chand apart from Sodhi Ram son of Dharma Khosia, Chaupat Rai son of Paira Chhibbar, Gual Das son of Chhuta Mal Chhibbar, Kirpa Ram son of Aru Ram Dutt who later led the deputation of Brahmins of Kashmir to Guru Tegh Bahadur. Text, Swarup Singh, n. 87, p. 69.
141. Ibid, p. 71.
143. Ibid, p. 196. Raymond's translation of *Siyar-ul-Mutakhirin* at places was preposterous and misled a number of historians to level allegations of political and social offences against Guru Tegh Bahadur. Cf. Ganda Singh, "The Martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur in Historical Setting." *PP&P*, XI, Oct. 1977, pp. 204-05.
144. Accroding to P.N.K. Bamzai (*History of Kashmir*, p. 371), tyrannised by the new Governor, Nawab Iftikhar Khan (1671-75) Kashmir Brahmins got the idea after praying to Lord Shiva at Amar Nath Cave Temple in March 1675.
145. Swarup Singh, n. 87, mentions of his father Aru Ram being a Sikh of Guru Hari Rai. Kirpa Ram, renamed Kirpa Singh after baptism in 1699, died fighting in the battle of Chamkaur in 1705.
145a. P.N.K. Bamzai, Kasmiri historian in his talks with the author in April 1995 contended that Kasmiri Brahmins were so orthodox till very recentaly, that they always had a Kashmiri Brahmins as their cook, and would not appoint a Punjabi Brahmin to their household.

Later at Paonta, Guru Gobind raised a battalion of Udasis under the leadership of Mahant Kirpal. He permitted them to have their own *langar* as they had compunctions at *shikar* being served in *Guru ka langar*.

146. Mohammad Ahsan Irad, *Fragments of Farrukhsyar Nama*, quoted in Ganda Singh, n. 143, p. 200.
147. Swarup Singh n. 87 pp. 72-73. Bhat Vehi Poorvi Dakhni mentions the date of birth of Guru Gobind Singh as Poh Sudi 7, BK. 1718, (18 December 1661) which seems correct.
148. Cf. Trilochan Singh, n.134, pp. 307-08.
149. Ganda Singh, n. 143, p. 200. Baba Gurditta son of Baba Buddha died the same day at Delhi and was cremated off Bhogal by side of Jumna.

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150. For entries in Bhat Vehi Multani Sindhi and Bhat Vehi Jado Bansian, Cf. Swamp Singh, n. 134. pp. 77-78.
151. Trilochan Singh, n. 134, p. 322.
152. It would have been in fitness of things that the Government of India should have projected the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur before the U.N. General Assembly in January 1948 when it adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in its proper perspective and asked for celebration of his martyrdom anniversay by all humankind as freedom of conscience day. But the new rulers of independent India led by M.K. Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, who were angling to overwhelm Sikhism to make it fall within the framework of Hinduism, did not do so deliberately, as that would have highlighted an aspect of Sikh history that was unpalatable to them. It also would have meant their conceding that Sikhism was a distinct religion, which they had no intention to do.
153. This line has been mistranslated by all scholars as cries of alas, bewailing, which is inherent in the previous line. Rather, Guru Gobind Singh conveys here the bewilderment of the populace at Guru Tegh Bahadur's offering the sacrifice in defence of the Brahmins' sacred thread and frontal mark which had been decried by Sikhism, since the childhood days of Guru Nanak, and standing by the side of Brahmins who had been conspiring against the Sikh movement now for a century.
154. Emphasis added. Guru Gobind Singh, Bachitar Natak, V, 13-16, This was based on his peroration address at the time of cremation of severed head of Guru Tegh Bahadur, cf. Swarup Singh, n. 87 pp. 78-80.
155. Quoted in Gopal Singh, n. 83, p. 282. This marked the beginning of the Sikh's attempts to punish the atrocious rulers of Delhi.
156. Gaur M. 1, 9, *A.G.*, pp. 224-25.
157. Nand Lal Goya was Mir Munshi of Prince Muazzam till the later's incarceration by his father in March 1687. During his 7-year long period. of detention, he approached a number of religious divines including Guru Gobind who foretold him not only of his release but also his succession. Cf, Punjabi Ms. of *Punjab Sakhian* of Guru Gobind Singh quoted in Dr. Mohan Singh (Diwana), 'New Light on Guru Gobind Singh', The *Spokesman* Weekly, (Delhi), January 17, 1966, p. 5.
158. Cf.Bhai Kahan Singh, n. 90, p. 862.
159. Swarup Singh, n. 87, pp. 91-92.
160. For Bhati Vehi Multani Sindhi entry, Ibid, p. 93.
161. Ibid, p. 97. The land for the forts partially came from the grant of two villages of Anampura and Tarapur by Raja Bhim Chand who accompanied by his mother Champa, had earlier paid the Guru a visit.
162. Bhat Vehi Multani Sindhi, Ibid, p. 98. Guru Gobind Singh, Bachitar Natak, part IX.
163. An entry in Krishan Chandar's Panda Vehi at Haridwar in the hands ofMani Ram, his Diwan, mentions Gobind Rai as his name. Text, Swarup Singh, Ibid, p. 102.
164. Cf. Gopal Singh, n. 83, p. 282 fn.
165. Ibid, pp. 282-283 fn.
166. Swarup Singh, n. 87, p. 104; Bachitar Natak, part X.
167. For entry in Bhat Vehi Bhadson, Pargna Thanesar, Swarup Singh, Ibid, p. 105; *Bachitar Natak*, part XII.
168. Ibid, p. 106; *Bachitar Natak*, part XII.
169. Ibid, pp. 106-07; *Bachitar Natak*, part XIII. Guru Gobind composed his *benti* (chaupai) which was one of the five compositions recited at the time of baptism of the Khalsa during this period. It forms part of Charitro-Pakhyan in *Dasam Granth*.

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170. Ibid, p. 104.
171. It was during this decade that he got extra-perceptory vision about the story of his birth, and the story ofBedis and Sodhis which he narrates in *Bachitar Natak*. Notwithstanding God's claiming him to be His son, while persuading him to go to this world, he continued to term himself to be *das*, devotee, of God in accordance with the Sikh philosophy. His conversation with God before his birth in no way affected the basic framework of Guru Nanak's teachings. No relationship of Father and Son as in Christianity is claimed either by Guru Gobind Singh or any of his predecessors.

    Also, it must be stated that all the compositions which form part of *Dasam Granth*, are not necessarily the work of Guru Govind Singh himself.
172. Mohan Singh, n. 157, the *Spokesman*, Baisakhi Number, 1966, p. 71.
173. Neither Guru Gobind Singh, nor any of the five beloved one's disclosed as to what happend inside the tent. There are various speculations.
174. He claimed that the double-edged sword had been given to him by God, all Death, in his previous birth at Hem Kund.
175. Mata Saheb Devan had not yet been pledged to the Guru. That was in 1700.
176. According to *Guru Kian Sakhian*. Guru Gobind Singh as part of code of conduct recited the only verse available in Dasam Granth about Khalsa. It reads, "He who meditates the Supreme Light, night and day, and believes not in another, has perfect love in the heart and puts not his faith in fastings, tombs, graveyards, and convents, and for whom the pilgrimages, consist in all no one but the One alone and whose heart is illumined with the Divine Light is a Khalsa, purest of the pure." 33 Swayas.
177. Quoted in Gopal Singh, n. 83, pp. 189-90.
178. Emphasis added. Ghulam Mohyiuddin, quoted in Ibid, p. 291.
179. Narang, n. 67, p. 80. This is notwithstanding his playing the role of a reactionary Hindu during the Gurdwara Reform Movement in first half of 1920s, when he even denied the separate entity of the Panth.
180. The only other people to do so were Marathas under the leadership of Shivaji. But the basis of Sikh nationalism were more fundamental, deep rooted and enduring.
181. Emphasis added. Quoted in Gopal Singh, n. 83, pp. 292-93.
182. Swarup Singh, n. 87, p. 121.
183. Bhat Vehi Talaunda. Ibid, p. 127.
184. Ibid, pp. 131-32.
185. Ibid, pp. 137-38.
186. Chet Sudi 1, BK. 1759 (March 1703). The Brahmins accepted back their women folk recovered on this and other occasions, without any *Shuddhi* ceremony, but raised hue and cry when women of ordinary men were recovered and restored to their families. That also happend in 1947 when even highly educated Hindus refused to accept their womenfolk.
187. Swarup Singh, n. 87, pp. 139-40.
188. Cf. Gopal Singh, n. 83, pp. 303.
189. Swarup Singh, n. 87, p. 143.
190. On ascertaining the motivations of Gangu Brahmin, the Subedar of Sirhind tortured him considerably to secure the Cash and Jewellery the Guru's mother had on her. He died of these tortures.
191. Bhat Vehi Karsindhu, Swarup Singh, n. 87, p. 144.

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192. Daulat Rai in his *Sahib-e-Kamal* (Biography of Guru Gobind Singh) has gone lyrical at the Guru's bravery in not surrendering, as against Napoleon and other generals in history doing so when in adverse circumstances.
193. Swarup Singh, n. 87, p. 149.
194. Ibid, p. 197.
195. The only other explanation could be that they were arranged by Nihang Khan who certainly was involved in coordinating with Pir Budhu Shah.
196. Swarup Singh, n, 87, pp. 149-50.
197. Ibid, p. 161.
198. Ibid. p. 162.
199. BhatVehi Multani Sindhi, text. Ibid, p. 188.
200. They were cremated the following day on the first day of *magh*, and every year the day is celebrated at Mukatsar in honour of the 40 Saved Ones. The account by traditional Sikh historians to place the disclaimer by the 40 at Anandpur, and after several days being rallied by Mata Bhag Kaur from their diverse places is riven with holes.
201. *Ahkam-i-Alamgiri* of Inayatullah refers to a representation made by the Guru. Irvine on authority of Warid also refers to the same.
202. For a summary of *Zafarnamah* by Dr. Mohan Singh, see, *the Spokesman* weekly, January 31, 1966, p. 11.
203. Syed Muhamad Latif mentions of his bestowing dress of honour on Bhai Daya Singh, and offering presents to the Guru.
204. Vincet Smith, *History of India*, (Oxford, 1920), p. 448.
205. Gandhi, n. 63. p. 454.
206. Swarup Singh, n. 87, p. 177.
207. Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs* (Princeton, 1963), Vol I, p. 93.
208. Mohan Singh, "New Light on Guru Gobind Singh", The *Spokesman* Weekly, January 11, 1966. Guru Gobind Singh himself did not participate in the battlefield.
209. All historians have mistranslated it 'slave'. Guru Gobind Singh was not producing slaves, but saint-soldiers or devotees like himself.
210. Swarup Singh, n. 87, p. 14 & 189. Bhagwant Singh, Koer Singh and Baz Singh were real Brothers, and first cousins of Bhai Mani Singh. The three alongwith their brother Sham Singh were martyred alongwith Banda Singh Bahadur in 1716 in Delhi. It was as part of their traders' convoy that Banda Singh and others left Nander for Punjab. Bhai Kahan Singh in *Mahan Kosh h* as substituted the names ofBagwant Singh and Koer Singh with those of their younger brother Ram Singh and Fateh Singh (alias Bijay Singh) son of Baz Singh. The other two members of the five member advisery commttee were Bawa Binod Singh and his son Kahan Singh, Trehans.
211. Sainapat, *Sri Gur Sabha* (Ed. Ganda Singh, Patiala, 1967) p. 166-67.
212. Ganda Singh "The Sikhs", *PP&P*, Vol XVI, April 1982, p. 47.
213. Swarup Singh, n. 87, p. 189-90. Gurbachan Singh Nayyar, "Last Injunctions of Guru Gobind Singh", the *Spokesman* weekly, Baisakhi Number, 1981, pp. 9-10. This entry in Bhat Vehi was attributed to Narbad Singh Bhatt who was with Guru Gobind Singh at Nander.
214. It is remarkable that the concept of Guru-Khalsa as Guru-Panth caught on immediately. *Sri Gur Sobha* written in 1711, three years after the asassination of Guru Gobind Singh expounds

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the doctrine, though theologically it was explicit in Guru Nanak's conferring the Guruship on his Sikh, Bhai Lehna, and bowing before him.

215. Swarup Singh, n. 87, p. 190-91.

216. Cf. Gandhi, n. 63, p. 465.

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3
Factors In Rise And Fall Of The Sikh Power
(1708 - 1849)

The political position of the Sikhs at the time of assassination of Guru Gobind Singh in 1708 was that of guerrillas. After a gruesome struggle of almost six decades they earned a place under the sun and emerged as sovereigns of the Punjab.

I

This period of the Sikh history or that of the Punjab has been painted with a dark brush by contemporary Mughal historians who presented the well entrenched forces of the status quo. The Sikhs, who constituted the revolutionary class, and emerged on the top in the quadrangular struggle for supremacy involving the Mughals, the Marathas, the Afghans and themselves, left no first hand account of their objectives, tactics or motivation.

The worst part of it was that the Sikh chroniclers who followed were either those left on the fringes in the ongoing struggle, or were infiltrators and felt themselves uneasy in the emerging milieu. They tended to distort the nature of the struggle by giving it a sectarian twist, in the process, making it look anti-Muslim and/or pro-Hindu. And, the twist came to stay during the 19th century and for the best part of the present one.

The modern historians mostly followed the Mughal chroniclers. By publishing the account of the period in the English language, they gave a degree of acceptance and respectability to this partisan history. The Sikhs who, from the position of being underdogs, emerged as sovereigns of the Punjab in 1765 went unrepresented while the vanquished Mughals and Afghans garnered the bulk in the traditional historical accounts of the period. Lack of training in writing the history of guerrilla movement, or personal predilections in refusal to recognise the distinct character of the Khalsa nationalism, which needed a separate treatment, or possibly both, lay at the roots of this lopsidedness.

II

To begin with, we may look into the objective situation of the Sikhs in 1708.

The assassination of Guru Gobind Singh in the south, in Deccan, far away from the Punjab, the center of Sikhism, left the Sikhs in a poignant situation.

Firstly, the Khalsa now barely nine and a half years old (but with a background of 200 years) represented an unfinished revolution.

Secondly, Guru Gobind Singh abolished personal guruship and bequeathed the Guruship spiritually to the *Adi Granth* and corporately to the cumulative Panth, i.e. the whole community. Both these concepts of *Granth* and Panth needed to be ingrained into Sikh psyche which was hampered by the difficult situation in which the Khalsa was placed during this period.

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Guru Gobind Singh had transformed the character of his disciples, deeply inspired the Khalsa and provided it with a high degree of motivation - a revolutionary ideology.

For a proper appreciation of the character of the Khalsa and its ideological motivation, we shall have to go back a bit to *Bachitar Natak*, the autobiography of Guru Gobind Singh, wherein he clearly says that the purpose of his being ordained by God Almighty to take birth again was "to uphold righteousness, protect the poor and uproot the evildoers". This combined with Guru Tegh Bahadur's prescription (*bhai kahoo ko det neh*, *neh bhai manat an*), that we shall not oppress any one, nor knuckle under oppression, provided the clear politico-religious framework for the Khalsa.

The Khalsa was involved in a fight against tyranny and oppression. It was a religious war in the sense that the Khalsa was inspired by religious ideals to fight against oppression, but not a religious war in the sense of fight against the Muslims or Islam. For, it was not.

Guru Gobind Singh himself during the pre-Khalsa and post-Khalsa period had fought against tyranny in all its denominations - against the incorrigible hill chiefs, the Mughal Governors and the imperial forces. He had Muslims in his army, and did not mince words in calling a spade a spade, be it a Hindu oppressor or a Muslim one. And, at the height of the crisis, it were the Muslim friends who had helped him to escape both from Chamkaur and Machhiwara to Malwa! For the Khalsa, in the post-Guru Gobind Singh period, non-sectarianism was an important principle, an article of faith, not to be lost sight of.

As such, the objectives of the Khalsa were, firstly, political, to fight against tyranny, and, secondly, in the face of wholesale oppression and persecution, of survival without letting the movement, despite provocations, to take a sectarian, anti-Muslim turn.

III

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Now, we may turn to the objective situation in the Punjab in the post-Aurangzeb and post-Guru Gobind Singh period. The various aspects which come forth are as follows.

Firstly, Aurangzeb's policy of religious intolerance had brought about a schism between the Hindus and the Muslims throughout the empire, the impact being mild or severe depending upon local circumstances. The *suba* of Sirhind especially constituted a reactionary *suba* known for an intensification of religious intolerance, especially because of the influence on the administration of Islamic puritans represented by the *Sajada Nashins* of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi Mujaddid Alaf Sani with headquarters at Sirhind.

Secondly, the rise of the militant Khalsa introduced a unique factor in the religious composition of the Punjab, making it a tri-religious state, which placed it apart from other parts of India with Hinduism and Islam as the two dominant religions. Therefore, the Punjab historically needed a separate treatment.

Thirdly, as we have seen, the rise of Khalsa, mainly taking converts from the low and middle class Hindus, in the process making them self assertive and militant, had made the upper class of Hindus - mainly Brahmins, and clannish hill rulers etc, rabidly anti-Sikh. This alignment was widened in Farrukhsiyar's period to include sections of Khatris and Banias, the moneyed and business classes, who thought it advisable to align with the Mughal administration. Faced by a rising tide of Sikh militancy, the administration thought it prudent to follow a policy of religious tolerance towards the Hindus as against systematic persecution of the Sikhs. This, at times, led to collaboration between the upper caste Hindus and the Mughal administration. It must be understood that a section of Punjabi or north Indian Hindus was not reconciled to the emergence of the Khalsa which struck at the roots of the Brahminical culture of *varnashram dharma*. They were as much inimical to the Sikhs as the Mughals or the Afghans, displaced from political power by the Khalsa, could be.

Lastly, the social egalitaranism represented by the militant Khalsa especially endeared itself to the poor populace/peasantry, alienated by an oppressive regime. It were these segments which provided recruits to the brotherhood of the Khalsa and did not let the movement dwindle, despite heavy losses in manpower that systematic persecution entailed. It must be understood that these new entrants needed a high degree of religious orientation, which was not available after the martyrdom of Bhai Mani Singh and the death of Nawab Kapur Singh.

IV

The Sikhs emerged on the political scene of the Punjab and northern India under the leadership of Banda Singh Bahadur who was especially commissioned by Guru Gobind Singh to initiate the process of political change and reform.

It is a pity that some of the historians out of ignorance or mischief have sought to make out that the Khalsa which, they agree, represented the new wave and constituted a reckonable force, at this crucial juncture was not led by one who himself belonged to the faith. Their contention that Banda was not baptised and did not take the *Pahul* (baptism) stems out of jaundiced mind, for various reasons.

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Firstly, they do not adequately explain how Lachman Dev Bairagi got the name *Banda* Bahadur as they give it out. If he had subjected his ego to that of Guru Gobind Singh and accepted his leadership as his *banda*, devotee, it beats one's intelligence that Lachman Dev would either refuse the boon of *Pahul* or that Guru Gobind Singh would deny him that boon. He got the name Banda Singh only after taking the *Pahul*.

Secondly, it is hard to think that either Guru Gobind Singh would appoint a non-anointed Sikh, who had reservations in taking *Pahul*, as the leader of the Khalsa, or that Banda would agree to lead such a highly devoted and dedicated corps without his taking *Pahul*, which constituted the bond of brotherhood of the force, which Banda expected to lead and which inspired his forces to extraordinary feats of heroism and bravery. His detractors tend to project that Banda was peevish in character, either a naive or a fool, which, they agree, he was not.

Thirdly, it is contended that Ahmad Shah Butalia who, to their knowledge, was the first to write about Banda's baptism did so a hundred years after the occasion and that he wrote without any contemporary historical evidence. They ignore or had no knowledge of the writings of men like Koer Singh (1751), Swarup Singh (1791), and others. Not only that, the motivations of trying to appease the Sikh ruler, Maharaja Ranjit Singh or Sikh Sardars, are attributed to Butalia. Both arguments are fallacious: they do not take into cognisance the evidence of oral history and attribute a zeal to Maharaja Ranjit Singh and to Sikh Sardars to falsify the Sikh history, which they did not have.

Lastly, they do not accept Butalia's historical writing but blindly accept Khafi Khan and other Muslim contemporary writers' description of Banda as a bloody monster. It is not that Ahmad Shah Butalia wrote a biased, motivated, history, but that these modern writers do not want to use the faculties of modern historiography and open up the windows of their mind.

V

Banda Singh took almost a year to surface near Delhi.[1] His *hukmnamahs* to Sikh *sangats* to repair to him fully armed evoked instant response. The people of Malwa straightaway gathered under his banner, while those from Majha and Doaba moved in an organised manner to arrive at Kiratpur, after fighting their way across the Malerkotla Pathans who blocked their way on the Sutlej. In due course, according to Ghulam Mohyuddin (*Fatuhat Namah-j-Samadi*, 1722-23) "people as far as Iran, Turan, Kandhar, Multan and neighboring climes and countries" started pouring into the Punjab in large numbers in disguise or even openly by the beat of the drum.

Banda Singh's proclamation calling upon all those who had suffered at the hands of oppressive Zamindars, or were tormented by anti-social elements, bullies and despots, to join him to get justice, opened up a pandora's box. It evoked an overwhelming response from people of all faiths, including Hindus and Muslims - to create vistas for a people's revolution. Banda Singh moved in a calculated manner to create general disorder and contempt for the imperial authority.

He ransacked the state treasury and the houses of the rich at Sonepat and worsted the small detachment carrying government treasury at Kaithal, of both cash and horses. In his first major action, he stormed Samana[2] on November 26, 1709, leaving 10,000 dead, and followed up by routing Faujadars of Kapuri and Mustafabad.

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That brought him to Sadhaura whose chief, Usman Khan, had earned the ire of Guru Gobind Singh because of his torturing of Pir Badruddin alias Buddhu Shah and his disciples to death for their role in the Guru's escape from Machhiwara to Malwa. The Hindus of the town whose houses used to be desecrated with cow's flesh by Usman Khan and his men, rose in revolt and went out of control. A general massacre followed including of those who had taken shelter in Pir Buddhu Shah's house, now renamed *Qatalgarhi*, slaughter-fortress. Baba Banda Singh, in remorse, took a firm decision not to permit in future an attack on places of religious worship, or let the struggle be reduced to a sectarian strife.

Banda Singh skirted Sirhind, and those awaiting at Kiratpur Joined him. He was now ready for an attack on Subedar Wazir Khan of Sirhind against whom the Sikhs had a special animus. Wazir Khan in self defence made Mullahs to raise cries of *Jehad*, religious war, against the Sikhs. He also used Diwan Sucha Nand's nephew to infiltrate with a 1,000 strong force into the opposing camp to kill Banda if possible, or to desert his forces after having joined him, so as to cause general demoralisation. Wazir Khan moved out 10 miles to Chapar Chiri to face Banda's forces which were ill-equipped but led by veterans of the wars of Guru Gobind Singh. In the fierce battle on May 12, 1710, despite large scale desertions from Banda's forces, especially of those who had come purely with motivations of plunder, Wazir Khan was killed and his forces routed. They were pursued upto Sirhind which submitted two days later.

On the fall of Sirhind, Banda Singh treated Hindus and Muslims alike. The town was ransacked for three days when he, to the chagrin of his troops, stopped the pillage. The Mausoleum of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi, Mujaddad Alif Sani, the doyen of Islamic fundamentalism and tormentor of the Sikhs, remained untouched.

The entire territory from Karnal to Ludhiana lay at his feet. The contemporary Muslim historians, though full of choicest invectives against the Sikhs as "wretched and worthless dogs", "hellish infidels", "fanatical ruffians", and Banda Singh himself as a "veritable monster", the vocabulary which we find throughout the Muslim writing on the Sikhs in the 18th century,[3] were high praise for their reckless bravery.

Banda Singh now assumed the title of Bahadur and set to organise the administration. Baj Singh was appointed Governor of Sirhind with Ali Singh (formerly in service of Subedar of Sirhind) as his deputy. The appointment of Fateh Singh (son of Baj Singh) as head of administration of Samana was confirmed while Ram Singh (younger brother of Baj Singh) and Binod Singh got the joint charge of Thanesar and the surrounding territory. A host of other appointments followed. From now onwards, Khalsa began to recite the couplet, *raj karega Khalsa* (Khalsa shall rule), in their congregations as part of their litany.[4]

Banda Singh chose Mukhlispur at the foot of Himalayas as his headquarters. He introduced a new calendar dating from his capture of Sirhind and struck coins as a mark or Sikh sovereignty.[5] He appointed Sikhs from low classes "a low scavenger or leather dresser, the lowest of the low in Indian estimation" as Irvine puts it as thanedars and tehsildars in his *parganas*.[6] He abolished Zamindari - the institution of absentee landlordism and made tillers of the soil the proprietors. That was applicable to tillers of all classes whether Sikh, Hindu or Muslim.

Ghulam Mohyuddin author of *Futuhat Nama-i-Samadhi* (1722-23) who fought against Banda's forces and calls them "devils incarnate" and "a calamity on earth" testifies that Banda ruthlessly

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annihilated social inequalities born out of caste prejudices, enforced rigid abstinence of the Sikhs from adultery, and otherwise adopted codes of conduct for his forces "to present themselves as embodiment of moral values."

Banda Singh now made forays into the Gangetic valley. The uprising of the Gujjars who declared themselves *Nanak Prasth*, followers of Nanak, strengthened his forces. He overran Sharanpur, Behar, Ambheta, and Nanauta by July 1710 when he laid siege to Jalalabad. It had to be lifted because of pressing demands of the Sikhs from Doaba.[7]

The Sikh uprising in Jalandar Doab came to successful fruition on October 3,1710, when they drove out the forces of Faujdar Shams Khan from Rahon. Earlier, the Sikhs of Majha extended their sway upto the outskirts of Lahore. Significantly, at the battle of Kotla Begam near Batala, they permitted the Afghans of Sauri village, who did not want to fight, to retire unmolested. In a short time, the Sikhs were masters of the area from the Ravi to the Jumna.[8]

Bahadur Shah was apprised of the news of Banda Singh's exploits on May 30, 1710, when he was at Ajmer. Taking into view the poignancy of the situation, he made up with the Rajputs and called for volunteers for *Jehad* against the Sikhs. He ordered mobilisation of available forces as far as Oudh, rallied Bundhela Rajputs against the Sikhs and himself personally proceeded in person to the Punjab.

All Hindu employees were made to shave off their beards to distinguish them from the Sikhs.

After the rainy season, the Mughal military machine started rolling the Sikhs back from various positions right from Sonepat (October 22, 1710), through different towns down to the siege of Lohgarh fort (early December). Hundreds of Sikhs were killed at various places and their heads sent to the Emperor. Banda Singh, however, escaped on the night of December 10, 1710, towards Shivalik hills to the chagrin of Bahadur Shah who now issued orders from his camp near Lohgarh to Faujdars in the neighborhood of Delhi "to kill the worshippers of Nanak (the Sikhs) wherever they are found".[9]

Banda Singh within a fortnight started sending orders to the Sikhs to liberate the Punjab and join him at Kiratpur. Presently, he sought to secure his hinterland. His first victim was Raja Ajmer Chand of Kahlur (Bilaspur), the mastermind behind bringing about a confrontation between the Mughal administration and the Khalsa in the post-1699 period. Other hill chiefs submitted. The ruler of Chamba offered him his daughter in marriage. Later, he married second time.

It is to the credit of Banda Singh Bahadur that despite the stresses, he kept to the non-sectarian creed of the Khalsa. In spite of Bahadur Shah's provocative orders of outright extirpation of the Sikhs, Banda Singh according to the royal newswriter, while at Kalanaur in April 1711, "has promised and proclaimed: *We do not oppress the Muslims* or oppose Islam, but only tyranny and usurpation of power. Accordingly, for any Muslim who approaches him, he fixes a daily allowance and wages, and looks after him. He has permitted them to recite *Khutba* and *namaz*. As such, five hundred Muslims have gathered around him. Having entered into his friendship, they are free to shout their call - *bang* - and say their prayers - *namaz* - in the army of the wretched (Sikhs)".[10]

Bahadur Shah's death in February 1712, at Lahore, gave Banda Singh some respite. But with the coming into power of Farrukhsiyar in another year, the campaign against the Sikhs was pursued with vigour and venom. Banda Singh, thereafter, had no positive achievement till his surrender at Gurdas Nangal in end-1715. He even failed to accept Binod Singh's sound advice to cut through the besieging forces and pursue guerrilla instead of conventional warfare.

Banda Singh Bahadur's successes were shortlived because of his lack of appreciation of the forces arraigned against him. If he were face to face with the oppressive forces in the Punjab only, he was and would have been a success. But the Mughal resources were vast - the whole of the empire. Banda Singh should have, firstly, confined merely to destruction of the oppressive forces and not tried to organise an alternative administration which made him overextend his meager resources. In other words, he should have continued to operate as a guerrilla leader rather than as a conventional military leader which led to his defeat. Secondly, he violated Guru Gobind Singh's instructions regarding corporate leadership of the Khalsa, provided by the council of *panj piaras*, five beloved ones, named by him to aid and advise him. By appointing Baj Singh as Governor of Sirhind and Binod Singh and others to a miscellany of positions, he struck at the root of corporate leadership, and emerged as the sole and absolute leader.

Banda Singh, however, died a heroic death. It was remarkable that not a single of over 700 Sikhs, a majority of whom had been arbitrarily rounded up from the villages along the route when Banda Singh's caravan was being taken from Lahore to Delhi, reneged his faith. They smilingly courted martyrdom, the bulk of them in March 1716 and Banda Singh and his top aides in a gruesome manner on June 9, 1716.[11]

Banda Singh's unconventional exploits touched the imagination of the populace and signified that oppressors were liable to be called upon to account for their sins of omission and commission. These singularly helped to unleash dynamic forces in the body politic and, despite the setbacks, instilled irrepressible confidence in the community.[12]

Farrukhsiyar in 1716 issued an edict, fixing a price on the head of every Sikh. This led to their systematic persecution till atleast his removal and death in 1719. He, however, brought about a fundamental change in the alignment of forces arraigned against the Sikhs. Renewing the orders of Bahadur Shah issued at the fag end of his life, he co-opted upper caste Hindus - Khatris, Brahmins and Banias - into the system of administration, and widened the schism between this section of the Hindus and the Sikhs.[13]

In a major reversal of policy, Farrukhsiyar in 1716 admitted the wrong done to Gangu Brahmin by Subedar Wazir Khan of Sirhind over a decade earlier in confiscating the gold, ornaments and coins misappropriated by him while betraying Guru Gobind Singh's mother and two younger sons to the Khan of Morinda. He now granted compensation to his son Raj Kaul in the form of land grant on *nehr*, canal, at Andha Mughal, a suburb of Delhi.[14]

In view of the rise of the Sikhs as a militant force in northwestern India, the Mughal administration pursued a policy of tolerance towards the Hindus and their places of worship. The upper caste Hindus emerged as the greatest beneficiaries of the Mughal-Sikh conflict, and rather developed a vested interest in it both for keeping their positions and carrying on their war against Sikhism.

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VI

In the post-Banda period, especially after the ignominous removal of Farrukhsiyar which gave the Sikhs some relief, they needed a wise leadership to ingrain the concept of the *Granth* and the *Panth* into the Sikh psyche. For a decade and a half, till his martyrdom, it was provided by Bhai Mani Singh,[13] an erudite scholar, well versed in exposition of Sikh scriptures and Sikh philosophy.

It were his missionary tours explaining the Sikh scriptures that helped to leave an indelible mark of recognition of *Shabad*, the Word, as contained in the *Adi Granth*[16] as the guru. The point that Bhai Mani Singh instilled into the Sikh psyche was that *Shabad* as contained in the *Adi Granth* in its entirety, without any distinctions, including the hymns of Bhaktas, was the Guru to be shown an equal degree of respect and reverence. Also, that the reverence was shown to the *word*, the hymns, and the volume of Adi Granth was not worshiped as an idol.[16a]

Bhai Mani Singh also exerted to bring about the recognition of Amritsar as politico-religious headquarters of Sikhism. It was the capital of Sikhism under Guru Ram Das, Guru Arjan and better part of Guru Hargobind's pontificate but had ceased to be so since 1634. Pilgrimages to places associated with the Gurus or with religious worship did not form part of the Sikh chore during the time of the Sikh Gurus.

The necessity arose when Bhai Mani Singh sought to translate the concept of Guru-Khalsa or *Sarbat Khalsa*, the whole community, as the corporate Guru. That was a democratic concept, far ahead of its times, and led to the concept of *Gurmatta*, or Guru's decision, taken by the community under the primacy of the *Akal Takht*.

Since the first recension of *Adi Granth* had been installed at Harimandir, it helped to assert the position of Amritsar as the politico-religious headquarters of Sikhism. A pilgrimage to the tank of nectar and a visit to Harimandir got deeply ingrained in the Sikh psyche, and provided a powerful stimulus to the community as the fulcrum of its self-assertion during the dark days of the 18th century.

Another significant contribution of Bhai Mani Singh was the emergence of the medium of *Ardas*, the prayer, as a continuous-evolutionary process, which continues till today, recounting the deeds of Sikh heroes and martyrs to serve as a beacon light to the community in those hard-pressed days.

VII

The worst type of persecution to which the Sikhs were subjected, in the post Banda Singh period, drove the menfolk to abandon their houses and escape to jungles of the Punjab, mountains of Shivalik hills and deserts of Rajputana. Those were very hard times. Forced with privations and overwhelming odds, the Khalsa kept high spirits. In consonance with that, they coined their own vocabulary giving luxuriant names to humble things of daily use, such as almonds for grams, silver pieces for onion peels, green pulao for cooked leaves of trees, *maha parsad* to cooked meat, and so on.

From about 1720, there was some relaxation which led the government to pursue dual policy of repression and rapprochement. The upper caste Hindus co-opted into the system were not

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amused. The transfer of governorship of Lahore from Abdul Samad Khan to his son Zakaria Khan also known as Khan Bahadur activated both the government and the antagonistic Hindus led by Diwan Lakhpat Rai to form hunting parties to search and destroy the members of the Khalsa.

The principal Hindu actors on the hostile scene, besides Diwan Lakhpat Rai, were Chuhar Mal Ohri of Amritsar, Deva the Chaudhary and his Brahmin Diwan Har Sahai of Patti, Sahib Rai the Chaudhary of Noshera, Pahar Mal grand son of Raja Todar Mal, Karma of Chhina, Rama Randhawa of Talwandi, Sahib Rai Sandhu of Noshera Datta and Harbhagat or Bhagat Naranjania of Jandiala. They acted as more royal than the king.

The objectives of inimical Hindus were no different from their imperial overlords. If the Mughal authorities ever offered the Sikhs a choice between Islam and death, the aspirations of Hindu hostiles were spelled out around 1726 by Sahib Rai of Patti to a couple of Sikhs who objected to his grazing his horses in their fields; he threatened them, saying, that "You talk of my horses trespassing into your fields. I tell you, my scissors will trespass into your beards and long hair."[17]

The Sikh guerrillas during 1720s were led by Jathedar Darbara Singh. Their main operations consisted of raids on government treasuries, despoiling the small parties carrying revenue of cash, horses and armaments, mulcting of caravans and interfering in their free flow, and ravaging the houses of rich Zamindars. The efforts of Turkish nobles supplemented by Pahar Mal to raise Haidri Flag expedition to sweep the entire Sikh population from their habitations in one big sweep, met a severe setback at the battle of Bhilowal between the crusaders and the Sikhs.[18] By early 1730s, the Sikhs had developed sufficient resources to be taken serious note of.

In a major reversal of policy, with the approval of the central government, Zakaria Khan now sought to co-opt the Sikhs into the system. He offered them the title of Nawab and a Jagir consisting of parganas of Dipalpur, Kanganwal, and Jhabal yielding an amount of rupees one hundred thousands. Services of Subeg Singh, a contractor (according to some a Persian knowing clerk in government service) were utilised to mediate between them and the Sikhs. He contacted the Khalsa in their Shivalik hideouts on the occasion of *Baisakhi* in end March 1733.

There could be only two candidates for Nawabi, Darbara Singh or his deputy, Kapur Singh. In the ensuing debate, Darbara Singh stated that Guru Gobind Singh "had promised us sovereignty. We cannot be content with a mere Nawabi". Eventually, after a great deal of discussion, it was decided to confer the Nawabi on Kapur Singh (b. 1697) who accepted the offer after the royal command was touched by feet by five leading Sikhs.[19]

The Sikhs now returned to their peaceful avocations in their villages. Nawab Kapur Singh organised the Sikhs into Buddha Dal consisting of war veterans of over 40 years of age to manage the shrines and do preaching work, and Taruna Dal of men under 40, a more active contingent to fight in times of emergency.[20] Soon, Taruna Dal grew to a strength of 12,000 and had to be organised into five parts each having its own center.

These were led by 1. Deep Singh, 2. Harnam Singh and Sharam Singh, 3. Kahan Singh and Binod Singh 4. Dasaunda Singh, and 5. Bir Singh and Jiwan Singh Rangrettas.[21] All castes, including the downcastes were fully represented.[22]

The imperial authorities at Delhi were concerned at the process of consolidation of Sikhism. They suspected Zakaria Khan of advocating reconciliation with the Sikhs with a view to assert his independence from Delhi. Zakaria Khan looked askance at the developments.

By the time, Bhai Mani Singh had asked for and was granted permission to organise a 10-day fair on the eve of Diwali at Amritsar on payment of a fee of Rs. 5,000. Harbhagat Naranjania of Jandiala, Karma of Chhina and others suggested to Zakaria Khan to use the occasion to put to the sword the entire Khalsa gathered for the fair.[23] Diwan Lakhpat Rai who was part of the Hindu conspiracy undertook to execute the orders when issued by the governor.

The Sikhs of Lahore got a wind of the machinations of the Mughal authorities and ill-disposed Hindus. They informed Bhai Mani Singh who passed on the word to the Sikhs, not to visit Amritsar for the occasion. Some of them who could not be informed reached there. Diwan Lakhpat Rai launched the attack as planned, and put to death a number of Sikhs taking bath in the sacred tank and outside. Harimandir was taken into government possession and Diwali could not be celebrated there.

Bhai Mani Singh protested against the conspiracy and the attack. He was instead called upon to pay the fee of Rs. 5,000. That was part of the story. What rankled in the mind of ill disposed Hindus were his proselytising activities. They were in the forefront in suggesting to his being converted to Islam or put to death[24]. In the vitiated atmosphere, it was difficult either for the Qazi or the Governor to resist such pleadings.

As such, Bhai Mani Singh was ordered to be cut to pieces, limb by limb. That was accomplished in June 1734 at *Nakhas*, horse market, outside Delhi Gate, Lahore, where Gurdwara Shahid Gunj stands now[25] One of his companions Diwan Singh was broken on the wheels. A number of other persons were also martyred.

Bhai Mani Singh's martyrdom caused a widespread resentment and constituted the landmark in Sikh-Mughal relations. By that time, thanks to his exertions, the Sikhs had, firstly, perfected their concept of the *Granth* and the *Panth;* Secondly, as shown by the debate over the acceptance of *Jagir* and Nawabi, had developed political ambitions to emerge as sovereigns of the Punjab; and, lastly, had developed the mechanics to outlive the worst type of persecution to which they were subjected.

Before the harvesting of 1735, the *Jagir* granted to Nawab Kapur Singh was confiscated. Nawab Kapur Singh's words that Khalsa would now rule over the Punjab instead of the small Jagir helped to fix the parameters and greatly enthused the Sikhs.

The incidents of 1734-35 forced Nawab Kapur Singh alongwith Buddha Dal and Taruna Dal to move on to Malwa. He busied himself now in administering *pahul*, baptism, and "converted a large number of people - jats, carpenters, weavers, *jhiwars*, *chhatris* and others to the persuasion of Gobind, and the religious respect in which he was held was so great that initiation into the *pahul* of the Guru with his hands was considered a distinction."[26]

By the time, moving columns of Lahore forces were on the lookout for the Sikhs. In the words of Kanahaya Lal "thousands of Sikhs fell, as a result of these measures."[27] The Sikhs in rage had again to leave for their resorts in jungles, hills and deserts. The Sikhs came in disguise to have

bath in Harimandir tank. And once Nawab Kapur Singh captured the Kotwali of Lahore and got released a number of prisoners besides taking care of the weapons.

Another achievement of the Sikhs under Kapur Singh during this period was their successful trampling upon the chiefs of Jhajjar, Dadri, Dujana, Bahadur Garh, Faridabad, Mehrauli and Gurgaon upto the outskirts of Delhi.

Then followed in end 1738, Persian invasion of India. The Sikhs felt elated. Nadir Shah shattered the administrative machinery and ravaged the countryside bringing destruction, desolation and disorder all around the Punjab. After defeating the Mughals at Karnal, he ravaged Delhi and collected a huge booty, including the bejewelled Peacock Throne, the famous Koh-i-Noor diamond (the mountain of light) and thousands of slaves.

For his return journey in 1739, he chose to travel by the foot of the Himalayas to avoid heat. That suited the Khalsa very well to deprive him of a part of the haul including Indian artisans and women. The Khalsa started harassing Nadir Shah's booty laden forces right from their entry into the Punjab down to the Indus. They deprived him of large part of plunder including men and women, without facing Nadir Shah's army in an open combat. When apprised of the character of the Khalsa whose "houses are their saddles", Nadir Shah perceptibly told Zakaria Khan that "The day is not distant when these rebels will take possession of the country."[28]

The Sikhs gained tremendously. Their exploits against the retreating Persian forces endeared them to the people and greatly added to their prestige and influence, especially when they restored Hindus and Muslims their womenfolk, taken by Nadir Shah's forces as spoils of war.

Zakaria Khan took to heart Nadir Shah's reprimand. He relentlessly pursued the policy of genocide of the Sikhs. The government used its civil and military machine now for the second time to achieve the objective. Regular companies were deputed to search and destroy them. A graded scale of rewards was offered to the people "a blanket for cutting of a Sikh's hair, ten rupees for information of whereabouts of a Sikh, fifty rupees for a Sikh's scalp. Plunder of Sikh homes was made lawful; giving shelter to Sikhs or withholding information of their movement was made a capital offence".[29]

Head-hunting became a gainful occupation. The prominent persons who conducted organised raids for Sikhs heads were Karma of Chhina, Ram Randhawa of Talwandi, Sahib Rai Sandhu of Noshera Dalla, Harbhagat Naranjania and Sain Das of Jandiala, and Dharma Das Topi of Jodh Nagar all Hindus, and Massa Rangar of Mandiala, a Muslim. They brought cart loads of Sikh's heads for reward.[30] Against that, Adina Beg who took over as *Nazim of* Jalandhar Doab did not crush the Sikhs for his own reasons. This further buttressed the Sikh's sense of discrimination between favourable and hostile Muslims and Hindus on the basis of their performance and not creed.

Massa Rangar committed the heinous crime of converting Harimandir into a dancing hall where he smoked and wined. Mehtab Singh of Mirankot with the help of Sukha Singh of Mari Kambo, disguised as Muslims, entered the precincts of Harimandir in August 1740. Sukha Singh kept the guard, while Mehtab Singh chopped off his head. They made good their escape. With the help of Harbhagat Naranjania, Mehtab Singh was later arrested and, after unspeakable torture on

wheels, crushed to death in 1744. Bota Singh who openly challenged the might of Mughal forces was another profile in courage to invite government's wrath.

On Harbhagat Naranjania's complaint, Bhai Taru Singh of his village was arrested and accused of providing rations to the Sikhs. Taru Singh admitted the facts. Nawab Zakaria Khan ordered removal of his scalp. Taru Singh said that the Governor would suffer as much torture. And, Taru Singh would take Zakaria Khan along with him to the other world.

The Nawab's orders were carried on June 27, 1745. The same day Zakaria Khan's urinary system stopped functioning, putting him in great pains. The Qazi addressed Taru Singh, "Of kafir, what have you done? The Nawab can't urinate. He is in great pains." Taru Singh told him to take his shoe and beat it on Zakaria's head to make him urinate. On fifth day of shoe beating, Zakaria Khan died on July 1, 1745. On hearing of that the same day Taru Singh left his mortal remains.[31]

Zakaria Khan has been acclaimed by Hindu historians as a just ruler who did not destroy Hindu temples. Following them, some thoughtless Sikhs too have written in the same vein.[32] They ignore the reasons for his lenient treatment of Hindus who were collaborators in his policy of extirpation of the Sikhs. They ignore the immense torture to which the Sikhs were subjected at Nakhas, Lahore. If they want to give him that certificate, they should follow Ishwari Prasad's treatment of invasions of Mahmud of Ghazni. That would make them say that Zakaria Khan to the Hindus of his day was a just ruler and not a fanatic, but to the Sikhs to this day he was a fiend, a devil incarnate.

VIII

The dispute between the sons of Zakaria Khan over succession to the governorship of Lahore enabled the Sikhs to consolidate their position. They assembled on Diwali, October 14, 1745, at Amritsar, and in the first formal *Gurmatta*, the *Sarbat Khalsa* resolved to organise the existing bands ranging from a dozen to larger numbers into 25 sizeable regiments or cavalry under the overall command of Nawab Kapur Singh.[33] Some of the commanders of regiments namely Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, Hari Singh Bhangi, Jai Singh Kanahaya, Naudh Singh of Sukrachak played prominent roles in wresting control of the Punjab for the Khalsa. The character of Sikh resistance now changed from hit and run tactics to guerrilla warfare which included organised warfare as well.[34]

The Sikhs attacked Lahore one evening and decamped with a large booty. Yahya Khan who had taken over as Governor asked Diwan Lakhpat Rai to displace the Sikhs from the nearby swamp haunts. One of the units led by Jassa Singh Ahluwalia on the way to the hills clashed with his younger brother Jaspat Rai and chopped off his head. Lakhpat Rai now in rage vowed to erase the Sikhs from the pages of history.

He got issued a proclamation for general massacre of the Sikhs. All the Sikhs of Lahore were beheaded at *Nakhas* on *amavas*, March 10, 1746, despite a petition by general body of the Hindus that the executions should not take place at least on *amavas*. The Sikh scriptures that fell into his hands were desecrated and destroyed.

Lakhpat Rai with the help of the provincial forces fell upon the Sikhs concentrated in the marshes of Kahnuwan on Ravi. Some cut their way through hostile hillmen to Kiratpur. The main body turned back and after heavy losses crossed the Beas and the Sutlej into Malwa. 7,000 Sikhs

were killed, and another 3,000 taken prisoners were executed at *Nakhas*, horse market. The disaster goes by the name of *chhota ghalughara*, small holocaust (as against great holocaust of 1762).

The fratricidal war (November 1746-March 1747) between Yahaya Khan and his younger brother Shah Nawaz gave the Sikhs some respite. The Sikhs met on Baisakhi, March 30, 1747, at Amritsar and resolved (through *gurmatta*) to construct a mud fort named Ram Rauni at Amritsar. This was completed in a short time.

Shah Nawaz who overthrew Yahya Khan was advised by his Diwan, Kaura Mal, a *Khulasa* Sikh as also Adina Beg to relent in pursuing harsh policy towards the Sikhs because of rising threat of Ahmad Shah Abdali, who after Nadir Shah's murder, had entrenched himself in Afghanistan and was casting covetous eyes on Hindustan. The Sikhs too because of their regards for Kaura Mal de-escalated their guerrilla activity.

Right from the first invasion of Ahmad Shah Abdali in January 1748, the Sikhs had a clear perception of the pattern of things to follow. They had drawn appropriate conclusions from the earlier invasion of Nadir Shah. They recognised that the Mughal rule, because of multiple centers of power and inherent contradictions between them, had become hollow. The Afghans had immense power to bring about an all-around destruction of social, economic, political and cultural ethos of the people and bring about a general anarchy and chaos. To optimise their gains, the Khalsa had to bring about a consolidation of their power under a centralised leadership. The Khalsa knew right from the beginning what was at stake, where their interests lay, and how those were to be achieved. They were clear about their strategy and tactics. The Khalsa welcomed a clash between the Mughals and the Afghans which would lead to their weakening, nay exhaustion, and destruction of each other. They looked amusedly at attempts of the two to retain or regain the sovereignty of Punjab.

From 1748 to 1765 Ahmad Shah Abdali invaded India, rather Punjab, seven times; his last three invasions from 1766 to 1769 constituted mere predatory incursions. During these 17 years, there was triangular, nay, quadrangular contest for sovereignty of Punjab.

Starting in December 1747, Ahmad Shah Abdali entered Lahore on January 12, 1748, plundered the suburbs and exacted a heavy tribute. Devastating the towns and countryside, he advanced to Manupur near Sirhind when the Mughal forces led by Wazir Qamaruddin (and on his death in the battle by his son Muinuddin known as Mir Mannu) checked his advance on March 11. The failure of the Mughal forces to pursue the retreating forces was reflective of their weaknesses.

The Sikhs moved in to fill the vacuum in central Punjab created by Mughal-Afghan conflict. They, firstly, under the leadership of Jassa Singh Ahluwalia defeated Adina Beg who on Abdali's advance had retired to Hoshiarpur, and, secondly, spilt the 25 organised regiments into over 60 bands and deprived the retreating Afghans of stores and horses.

On Baisakhi, March 29, 1748, the Sikhs by a *gurmatta*. Guru's resolve, decided to form Dal Khalsa by a reorganisation of over 60 *armed jathas*, bands, into eleven associations (*mists*) under the overall leadership of Jassa Singh Ahluwalia. Nawab Kapur Singh because of his age sought retirement from active overall leadership. These were as follows:

1. Ahluwalia, under Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, who was also supreme of all the misls.
2. Faisalpuria or Singhpuria, under Nawab Kapur Singh.

3. Sukerchakia under Naudh Singh of Village Sukarchak near Gujranwala.
4. Nishanwalla under Dasaunda Singh, the standard bearer (nishanwala) of Dal Khalsa.
5. Bhangi, under Hari Singh of the village Panjwad. (The name came from addiction to *hashish* (*bhang*) of Hari Singh's predecessor Bhuma Singh.
6. Kanahaya, under Jai Singh of village Kahna.
7. Nakkai, under Hira Singh of village Baharwal, situated in a tract near Lahore called Nakka.
8. Dallewalia under Gulab Singh of the village Dalewal.
9. Shaheed, under Deep Singh. The name Shaheed (martyr) came after the martyrdom of the leader.
10. Karora Singhia, under Karora Singh of the village Paijgarh.
11. Ramgarhia under Nand Singh, and later Jassa Singh Ramgarhia.

Phoolkia under Ala Singh of Patiala was the twelfth *misl*, but it was not a part of the Dal Khalsa and sometimes acted against the interests of the community.

The cumulative forces of the 11 misls were termed Sarbat Khalsa, the entire Panth. For its democratic functioning, rules were drawn with Akalis, who were stern zealots, responsible for religious affairs at Amritsar, playing a pivotal, supervisory, role.

Mir Mannu took over as Governor of Lahore in April 1748 and sought to establish a strong government. By the time, that Afghans were cleared of the province, three *Doabs* between Chenab and Ravi, Ravi and Beas Beas and Sutlej were under the Sikh occupation. The Afghans still held Multan.

The main events of the next two decades, when in between the Sikhs took over Lahore and struck coins in 1765 to signify their assumption of sovereignty, may be recalled with advantage.

* Lahore during the next 17 years, 1748-1765, had fifteen governors with Mir Mannu covering the first five and a half years. He began as governor appointed by the Mughals. After the third Abdali invasion of 1751-52, Lahore and Multan became part of Afghan empire, but he continued as governor. Mughal empire succumbed but in name, after Abdali's invasion in 1755 when Marathas entered Delhi and rolled back, with the help of Adina Beg, a Machiavellian character, and the Sikhs, the Afghans upto Attock. Abdali's next invasion, 1759-1761, shattered Maratha power, but Afghans too were exhausted, to the advantage of the Sikhs. The Sikhs under the patronage of Diwan Kaura Mal, a *Khulasa* Sikh, cooperated with Mir Mannu. This cooperation was snapped on Kaura Mal's death on March 6, 1752, in action during Abdali's third invasion. Thereafter, Mir Mannu as a nominee of Afghans pursued the policy of extirpating them. If nothing else, their women and children were taken to the *Nakhas*, Lahore, in hundreds, were subjected to gruesome torture and martyred there. In 18 months, he killed about 30,000 of them. The peasantry crushed, because of the Afghan depredations and roving provincial troops in search of the Sikh families, in large numbers joined the Khalsa fold or offered them protection.
* After Mir Mannu's death in November 1753, which signalled coming to an end of organised government, the Sikhs filled the vacuum in the administration by offering protection, *rakhi*, on payment of one-fifth of produce on harvests. After Abdali's 1756-57 invasion, the *rakhi* was recognised by Sarbat Khalsa to constitute the territorial possessions of the *Misls*.
* The Sikhs cooperated with Adina Beg and Marathas to oust the Afghans in 1758. They disrupted Abdali's advance during his invasion of 1759-61 to crush the Marathas. With the

death of Adina Beg in 1758 there were three claimants to Punjab in Afghans, Mughals and Marathas, but only one master in the Sikhs. In the *wada ghallughara*, great holocaust of 1762, near village Kup, Abdali killed about 30,000 Sikhs - mostly old men, women and children being escorted to a safer place. The main body of the Sikh fighting force remained intact.

* The Sikhs invariably harassed invading Afghan forces during their various invasions by depriving the booty-laden forces of much of the spoils of war besides prisoners, including Hindu and Muslim women. The Sikhs earned wrath of Abdali, who on three occasions, 1757, 1761, and 1762 pulled down Harimandir and defiled the sacred tank by caracases of cows.
* The Sikhs for the first time in 1757 defeated Afghan forces at the battle of Amritsar. That constituted a turning point. The following year, they captured retreating Afghan forces and made them clean Harimandir and the sacred tank. In October 1762, shortly after the *ghallughara* they again equitably measured sword with the Afghan forces in the battle of Amritsar. In 1764, they captured Lahore and in retaliation split hog's blood in the Shahi Mosque. But living upto their character they did not destroy the mosque or kill a single Afghan prisoner in cold blood.

The Sikhs parcelled Lahore in 1765 between Gujjar Singh and Lehna Singh Bhangi and Sobha Singh of Kanahaya Misl. They forbade plunder and established a non-sectarian and just administration. They struck coins as a mark of sovereignty. Abdali retook Lahore in 1766 and on the people's suggestion offered governorship to Lehna Singh who declined. The people by now were sick of Abdali's incursions , and wanted the Sikh rule to firm up. Syed Bulleh Shah, the Sufi Saint, openly welcomed the Sikh rule. Abdali after another couple of predatory incursions gave up.

The Sikhs being only indigenous people, sons of the soil, involved in the political struggle succeeded in liberating the Punjab from the clutches of foreign rulers. It was a triumph of Khalsa nationalism. Some historians have erroneously put forth the thesis about the rise of Punjabi nationalism. There never was such a thing. The Sikh rule was definitely established with the willing consent of the general populace - Muslims and Hindus.

IX

What brought about that transformation? How the Sikhs found general acceptance? Here are some of the reasons.

Firstly, the repeated invasions of Ahmad Shah Abdali, helped to bring about a general chaos and anarchy, a high degree of economic and public insecurity (*khadha pita lahe da*, *rehnda Ahmad Shah da*), and a personal tragedy for a large body of population, irrespective of caste, creed or religion.

Secondly, the contest between the Mughals and the Afghans both of them Muslims, and the Afghans plundering expeditions against the Muslims and the non-Muslims equally, weakened the Muslims' euphoria for their co-religionists. It made them understand that they were co-sharers in adversity along with other people. This tended to break the religious barriers between the various communities and highlighted the geographical compulsions, of being residents of a particular place and province, making the ground fertile for the Sikhs, the only indigenous force operating at the time.

Thirdly, the deeds of the Khalsa at first in depriving the invaders of the booty and the Indian prisoners, including women, and later confronting the invaders, in the process teaching them a

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lesson, put a new heart in the populace. This made them look towards the deeds of the Sikhs in a favourable light and as a ray of hope for the delivery of the province from the obnoxious invaders and plunderers from the outside. The exploits of the Sikhs in recovery of the Hindu and Muslim women from the clutches of invaders and their restoration to their families gave birth to a Punjabi adage, "*Chhaie*, *ke run gaee Basre*, *Ke mori baba dang walia Sardara*" - alluding to the abduction and sale of Indian woman at Basra market, and appealing to the Sikh armed brothers to retrieve them. This spoke volumes about the popularity of the Khalsa especially during Ahmad Shah's invasions.

Lastly, the sterling qualities and purity of character maintained by the Khalsa including their commitment to secular ideals - lack of discrimination in treatment towards the general body of Hindus and Muslims, earned them a general acceptability. In the words of Qazi Nur Mohammad, the Sikhs were the "beau ideal of a human being and were popular among the people of the Punjab." Mind it, he is using the word "people of the Punjab", and not Hindus or Muslims.

Oazi Nur Mohammad, it may be recalled/came in the train of Ahmad Shah Abdali in 1764, was a participant in the fight against the Sikhs, and was a keen observer of things around him. He wrote that Sikhism was a religion distinct form Hindus. He also made some telling remarks about the character of the Sikhs. In his testimony:

1. "They (the Sikhs) never kill a coward and do not obstruct one who flees from the field". (They seldom resorted to cold blooded murder even of their enemies).
2. They respect the chastity of women as part of their faith and honour: "adultery does not exist among them."
3. "They do not rob a woman of her gold and ornaments, may she be a queen or a slave girl".
4. They "never resort to stealing and no Thief exists among them and they do not keep company with the adulterer and the thief."
5. "When in festivities, they surpass Hatim (in generosity)".[35]

Coming from the pen of a bigoted Qazi, who otherwise used most offensive expressions against the Sikhs (whom he called dogs), their religion and their Gurus, these remarks, firstly, explain the reasons which made the Sikhs the "beau ideals" of the people and, secondly, represented the general characteristics of the Khalsa throughout the period from 1708 onwards.[36] The ideals laid down by Banda Singh as spelled out by Ghulam Mohyuddin (1722-23) were strictly followed by the Khalsa during the period.

The Sikhs emerged sovereigns of the Punjab but had to pay a very heavy price. They were subjected to worst type of persecution, and thrice during the period the authorities pursued the policy of genocide - all out extirpation. Really, two hundred thousand of Sikhs were put to death during the period.[37] Three generations of the Sikhs perished before the Sikhs emerged sovereigns of the Punjab.

The question for the young nascent community was one of survival. This helped to bring about certain distortions in the Sikh psyche. Guru Gobind Singh was a saint, a soldier, a scholar par excellence, all combined in one. He ordained the Khalsa in his own image and envisioned it to combine all the three characteristics. Face to face with the struggle for their very survival, the Sikhs came to lay overemphasis on the martial character of the Khalsa at the cost of intellectual and dialectical characteristics. Consequently, in the 18th century, after Bhai Mani Singh, the Sikhs failed

to produce an intellectual of that calibre, much less a group of them, to write about the account of Sikhs' struggle for survival, the tactics adopted by the Khalsa to overcome their handicaps, and their guerrilla tactics which they successfully applied against the mighty Mughal and Afghan forces. Not even about Sikh religion and philosophy, much less to guard the Khalsa against Brahminicial designs to subvert it from within.

The mass scale entrants to the Panth during 1750s and after, especially after the death of Nawab Kapur Singh in 1752, could not be imparted indepth grounding and schooling in Sikhism. That affected the orientation of the community which was quite discernible during the period of the Sikh rule, both the *Misls* and the Kingdom under Ranjit Singh and his successors.

X

The three and a half decades of *Misaldari*[38] period when the Punjab was parcelled out in an incongruous manner between the various *Misls*, and the enterprising Sikh Sardars holding their sway in the areas between the Sutlej and the Yamuna, reflected a classic picture of a fractured leadership. Its only advantage was that sooner, in mid-1760s, the Sikh *Misls* swept over the Punjab and established their sway.

Jassa Singh Ahluwalia had been overall incharge of the eleven *Misls* and at one time had been proclaimed Sultan-ul-Quom, the supreme leader of the nation. But no effort was made to weave the *Misls* into a federal set up.

Significantly, around the same period, the thirteen American colonies which had overthrown the colonial rule, had coalesced to set up a federation, however weak, of the United States of America, under the powerful leadership of George Washington. The Sikh *misls* failed to throw up such a leadership, principally because they had neglected intellectual dialecticism and the art of reasoning. There was no one to put forth a synthesis of Sikh commonwealth as a logical outcome of the hard won Sikh struggle.

This reflected, inter allia, the failure of Jassa Singh Ahluwalia to assert his leadership, and of the Akalis to analyse the emerging scenario. Not surprisingly, the institutions of *Sarbat Khalsa* and *gurmatta* which had done good to the Panth in dire times, fell into disuse[39]. There was all round failure of corporate leadership of the Panth at the time of triumph.

For about two decades, the ground situation in northern India was conducive for the Sikhs to extend their dominion to the Gangetic valley and into Rajputana. The Afghan had got exhausted and retreated from Punjab. The Mughals had collapsed. The Marathas were a spent force. The English were still far away. Rohillas, Jats, Rajputs and the Nawab of Oudh were weak, disunited and declining.[40]

The Sikhs had the power. They were the only reckonable force at the time. But they lacked imagination and unity of purpose. They had no overall plan-outlines to move in a systematic manner, and a well defined objective to achieve. Their seventeen incursions in over two decades (1763-88) led them to levy *rakhi* in the Gangetic valley, but these proved predatory after the appointment of Mahadji Scindia as Vizir-ul-Mutlak of Shah Alam in December 1784, when the imperial defences were strengthened. The Sikh were wiser after the event.[41] But the hours of the

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clock could not be put back. Their efforts to set things aright came to naught. It only showed their bankruptcy and want of competent leadership.

It was worse that in the absence of threat from without, the *Misls* in a decade were on the cantankerous path, often at loggerheads with one another. They formed leagues within themselves or aligned with outside forces like Raja of Jammu to fight against each other over trivial matters. There was all round growth of petty jealousies. The Panth counted for nothing.

The *Misls* were woken, as if from a slumber, by the recrudescence of the Afghan invasions under Shah Zaman, grand son of Ahmad Shah Abdali, who ascended the throne at the age of 23 in 1793. He was much influenced by invitations from the Mughal King of Delhi, Rohilla Chief of Rampur, Tipu Sultan of Mysore and even the ruler of Kangra. They invited him to invade India for diverse reasons. He told the Mughals and Rohillas that he was coming to chastise the Sikhs. From the Sikhs, he sought passage through Punjab to chastise the Marathas.[42]

Presented with the demand, the *Misl* chiefs were agreeable to give him passage. But young Ranjit Singh Sukarchakia (b. 1780) grandson of Maha Singh then a young sibling according to the British records said, "My presents will be personally delivered to the Shah on the field of battle." Shah Zaman made three attempts to capture Lahore. He had to beat a hasty retreat in January 1796 because of troubles at home. Later in the year, he did capture Lahore when the *Misl* chiefs retired from the capital. The Sikhs gathered at Amritsar to defend the holy city. In the reckless hand to hand fight at Amritsar on January 12,1797, Shah Zaman lost 20,000 of his choicest soldiers against 15,000 Sikhs who pursued the retreating Afghans upto the outskirts of Lahore.

Ranjit Singh with his 9,000 troops was made responsible for security of the holy city. That marked the beginning of the rise of Ranjit Singh. Shah Zaman sought to conciliate the Sikhs during his next two invasions in 1797 and 1798. His overrunning the Punjab to Lahore was demoralising to the people. He, however, had to beat a hasty retreat because of Persian invasion and revolt of his half brother Mahmud, never to return to Punjab.

Because of his exploits against Shah Zaman, Ranjit Singh's stock rose in the estimation of the people. Men of all communities in Lahore petitioned him to capture the city and take them under his protection. His capture of Lahore in July 1799 without any resistance marked the death knell of the *misaldari* system and the beginnings of the rise of Sikh monarchy.

XI

During the *Misl* period and of the monarchy of Ranjit Singh, no concerted effort was made to instill the teachings of the Gurus in the people's mind or take care to keep those teachings in their pristine purity.[43] After Nawab Kapur Singh's death especially, the Brahminical subverters had the heyday. This neglect proved very costly. The Sikh values were eroded and corroded in a subtle and not so subtle a manner. Because of Sikh Sardars' carelessness, Brahminical ritualism took hold of the common man of all denominations - Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims alike. The Brahmins were aided and abetted by Udasis and Nirmalas.

The Udasis had earlier, during the period of persecution of the Sikhs, managed the Gurdwaras but did nothing to promote Sikhism. They were far from the Khalsa fold. Over time, they had relapsed into old Hindu practises and emerged as a monastic order. With the grant of *Jagirs*, land grants, to the Sikh shrines, their outlook became all the more sinister. They did not

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encourage the participation of Sikh *sangat* in the management of the shrines, and the Gurdwaras progressively became like Hindu temples. They began to present ten Gurus as Avatars of Vishnu and Guru Granth Sahib as the fifth Veda.

Then there were Nirmalas who did provide teaching of Gurmukhi alphabets and of the Sikh scriptures. Because of their Vedantic interpretation of the Sikh scriptures, their impact was not wholesome. They provided the groundswell in which the activities of Udasis and Brahmins could not be looked with disdain. The Nirmalas began to establish *deras*, hospices, wherein they began to practise Hindu rites for births and deaths, and guidance regarding Hindu *sahas* and *nakshatra*, auspicious or inauspicious days, and astrological fixtures. They ceased to provide correct lead to the community. This went on during the period of Ranjit Singh too.

It was all the more reprehensible that distortions were made in the second half of 18th century by subverting the Sikh theology and orientation. To begin with, the bulk of peasantry which came within the fold of the Khalsa in 1750s could not be properly initiated into the Khalsa code of conduct. The Afghan depredations and the vacuum in the Sikh leadership following the death in 1752 of Nawab Kapur Singh, who had carried on the work of Bhai Mani Singh, were the main factors. Then came a concerted effort by the caste Hindus (including the scions of families like those of Rama Randhawa, Karma Chhina and numerous others who had actively collaborated with the Mughals in persecution of the Sikhs) following the rupture in their equation with the Mughal administration in the wake of Abdali's invasions, to join the Khalsa fold. They did so not out of conviction, but for tactical reasons, to safeguard Hindu interests and subvert the Sikh movement from within.

The beginning was made by Koer Singh (alias Bishan Chand, a Vaishnavite Hindu), a man of considerable talents. He remained deeply rooted in his ancestral faith and admits he was a Sikh only in name. His assumed name Koer, a child under five years of age, was suggestive. By giving himself as Kalal, he sought to identity himself with Jassa Singh Kalal, the then leader of Dal Khalsa.

The underlying objective of his political treatise *Gurbilas Patshahi 10* (1751) was a plea to the Hindus to support the Sikh movement 'in the interest of self-preservation'. He sensed Sikh victory in the ongoing struggle in Punjab but regarded himself an influential writer and "hopes to manipulate the fast emerging power relationship to the greatest advantage of Hindus."[43] He invented the myth of Guru Gobind Singh's worshipping goddess Durga also known as Kali on the eve of creation of the Khalsa, but perceptibly added that all Hindu gods and goddesses blessed Guru Gobind Singh in his venture. He, thereby, sought to confer legitimacy on the low castes and outcastes who constituted the main Khalsa battle line taking up arms to wrest sovereignty. On top of it, despite his averment of contradictions between *varnashram dharma* of Hindus and pluralistic Khalsa order which was buttressed by the Khalsa code of conduct which he spelled out, he proceeded to regard the Sikh Gurus as incarnation of Vaishnav gods. His hatred of Muslims is spread all over the *Gurbilas* and is infectious.

Koer Singh proved himself to be a successful infiltrator and subverter of Sikh theology. From the internal evidence, it is obvious that it was he who under the pen name of one Gurdas, composed a *Var*, Ode, and had it added as 41st Var to the compositions of Bhai Gurdas whose compositions are considered the key to Adi Granth.

In this Var, Gurdas sang of the sublimity of Khalsa baptism and hailed the unique place of Guru Gobind Singh as both the Guru and the disciple, at one and the same time. As a matter of fact, there was nothing new to this concept which was extant since Guru Nanak's bowing to Lehna as his successor. Amidst his lyricism and *wah*, *wah* (hail,) he asserts that Guru Gobind Singh worshipped and appeased Kali on the eve of creation of Khalsa. Fill today, even the devout Sikhs who vehemently deny that Guru Gobind Singh ever worshipped Durga, sing his *Var* without understanding the mischief implicit in its contents. Gurdas in this *Var* also gave full expression to his bitter hatred of the Muslims and asserted that because of Sikh ascendancy, no Muslim could go in for circumcision or recite the name of Allah! He even went to the extent of claiming that the religion of the Prophet had come to an end.[44] Wherefrom he got his absurd facts? It is beyond one's comprehension.

Such outlandish ideas and expositions helped to cause distortions in the Sikh fundamentals and gave an unnecessary tilt to Sikhism in favour of Hinduism and against Islam.

Then followed Kesar Singh Chhibbar, a Brahmin, and a malcontent. In his *Bansavali Nama* written in 1769, he left no stone unturned to subvert the Sikh doctrines, and their struggle for national self-assertion. Chhibbar's ancestors Diwan Dargah Mal, his nephews Bhai Mati Das and Sati Das, and sons Sahib Chand and Dharam Chand had held high offices under the seventh to the tenth Gurus. But that did not mean that their descendant like Kesar Singh could be true followers of his ancestors.

To Chhibbar, the contemporary Sikh efforts to establish their rule was nothing but *raula* - chaos and anarchy of *kalyug* (dark age) that forebode liquidation of Sikhism itself shortly. To him, the main purport of the Sikh rule should have been to uphold Brahmins and the Brahminical *varnashram dharma*. But instead, he found *Sudras*, including Jats, on the top. He was not reconciled to that. He went to the extent of inventing despicable stories about Shaikh Farid and Ravidas. He lived on the fringe of the Sikh faith. He elaborated the myth of goddess Kali who on the eve of the creation of Khalsa allegedly advised Guru Gobind Singh to create the Panth to fight the demons and establish his rule. But that "would be an infernal collection of sin." With such blinkers, he went on to undermine the Sikh fundamentals and ideology.

Soon to follow him was Sarup Das Bhalla, descendant of Guru Amar Das. In his *Mehma Parkash* written in 1776, he sought to rehabilitate the descendants of Sikh Gurus including Prithi Chand, Dhir Mal and their offspring who in actual fact were nothing but detractors of Sikhism and Sikh ideology.

Mention may be made here of Sohan Kavi's *Gurbilas Patshahi 6*, written in 1718. This was revised and updated in early 19th century. Sohan Kavi brings in a lot of rituals in contravention of the Sikh ideology, so much so that in the words of Surjit Hans it could very well be subtitled "Magic and the Decline of Religion".[45]

Amidst such general decline, it was not surprising that even man like Bhai Santokh Singh (whose *Gurpratap Suraj Granth*, *1843*, provided the main inspiration to the Sikh theologians and historians for the next hundred years and beyond) was led astray on many counts including that but for Guru Gobind Singh, Hinduism would have been overwhelmed by Islam. Such type of writings tended to give birth to untenable theories that the Khalsa was created to uphold Hinduism.[46] Far from it.

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A direct impact of Brahminical infiltration was the erosion of the concept of equality from amongst the Sikhs. This administered a crippling blow to their team spirit, *espirit de corps*. All the ills of the Khalsa could be traced to this impact. It prevented consolidation of the Sikh power *a la* thirteen American colonies during the *Misl* period. It splintered the Sikh social structure and had a demeaning impact on the Khalsa's concept of brotherhood rising above caste and class consciousness. It adversely affected the downtrodden who were in the forefront as members of Nishanwalla *Misl*. They were flag bearer of the Dal Khalsa but had failed to establish political rule. Consequently, as against the Kalals (wine distillers), Thokas (Carpenters) and branches of Jats including Sansis to which Ranjit Singh belonged, they lost their status and came out no better than their Hindu counterparts. Their downfall during Ranjit Singh era was complete and wholly negated Sikhism. It was a major factor in the fall of the Sikh political power.

XII

The four decades of Kingdom under Ranjit Singh symbolised the crowning of the Sikh effort to seize power. It was for the first time after the defeat of Anangpal by Mahmud Ghazni in 1001 that an indigenous rule was established in the province. It put the Punjab on the map of the world. But, so far as Sikhism was concerned, it caused a big stink.

Ranjit Singh was helped by a fortuitous circumstance that the leaders of Dal Khalsa were either dead or too old. Of the new-generation leadership that was coming up, there was none to match him in realpolitik. The fact that the *misls* had already put Sikhism on the downhill journey, with its being heavily infiltrated by Brahminism, also helped to separate morality from polity. His shrewdness and pragmatism was buttressed by ruthlessness and political opportunism.

His recovery of Shah Zaman's canons from Jhelum river and despatching them to Kabul, and receiving *Khillat* in return[47] regularising his occupation of Lahore was not unwelcome to Ranjit Singh to hoodwink his Muslim subjects[48]. His demeanour and intentions were, however, clear right from the beginning.

Jassa Singh Ramgarhia, Gulab Singh Bhangi of Amritsar, Sahib Singh Bhangi of Gujrat, Jodh Singh of Wazirabad and Nizamuddin Khan of Kasur got together in early 1800 to oust him from Lahore. But the failure of their forces to engage those of Ranjit Singh at Bhasin near Lahore even after two months of facing them, and their dispersal on death of Gulab Singh because of excessive drinking, gave him a much needed boost. It also enabled him to deal with them individually, to his advantage.

Ranjit Singh's coronation ceremony on Baisakhi, April 12, 1801, when Baba Sahib Singh Bedi, a descendant of Guru Nanak, anointed him with *tilak* of Maharaja (Raja of Rajas) when he assumed the title of Sarkar-i-Wala was significant. He struck *Nanak Shahi* coins symbolising sovereignty the same year. These had the inscription of Banda Singh Bahadur and of Dal Khalsa, *deg teg fateh nusrat bedrang*, *yafat az Nanak Guru Gobind Singh*, on one side and year and place of issue on the other.[49]

That put Ranjit Singh shades higher than his fellow *misl* chiefs. He was quite conscious of the *misl* chiefs' reluctance to accept the supremacy of anyone from amongst themselves, and moved in a systematic manner to reduce them to submission.

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His exchange of turbans with Fateh Singh Ahluwalia of Kapurthala and solemn vows of eternal brotherhood over the *Guru Granth* in 1802 was a masterly act. Fateh Singh Ahluwalia was equal in territorial, military and financial resources. Being a descendant of Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, head of Dal Khalsa, he had a better claim to the leadership. Ranjit Singh utilised his resources and those of his mother-in-law, Sada Kaur, a remarkable woman and head of Kanahaya *misl*, to consolidate his power.

Ranjit Singh was quite unscrupulous in dealing with his opponents or even his allies. He was not constrained by treaties, agreements or solemn oaths on the holy book. "He entered into them or violated them as best suited his schemes."[50] He used all the strategems and artifices to expand his kingdom. It was fortuitous that Kapurthala could avoid being absorbed. Sada Kaur's imprisonment in 1821 and her death seven years later cast a slur on Ranjit Singh.

Ranjit Singh's welding his kingdom from the Sutlej to the Indus and beyond into a single unit involved his overpowering of over a dozen Sikh *misaldars* spread unevenly from the Sutlej to the Indus, 27 Hindu chiefs clustered around Jammu and Kangra hills, and over a score of Muslim territories either under direct rule of Kabul government (Kashmir, Multan, Peshawar) or owing allegiance to it (Kasur and Kunjpura) apart from Punjabi Muslim chiefs and tributaries. He did not stop at Indus. His search for a scientific frontier made him to go beyond to Khyber pass and close it by taking control of Peshawar and Hazara territories, and construction of a chain of forts on the hills to keep the wild tribesmen and invaders at bay.[51] In the process, he reversed the trends of history. It was through the Khyber pass that foreign invaders had poured into India from times immemorial right from the Aryan waves down to the Afghan hordes.[52]

Despite Ranjit Singh's lasting contribution, his Kingdom was emphemeral. It contained within itself the seeds of its destruction. Ranjit Singh's lopsided appraisal of the fundamentals of his state, which constituted the basic nodes of his power, and his persistent failure to judge the character of the men he put in key positions and came to control the levers of power, especially at the time of his death,[53] were the main factors for that.

In sharp contrast was Hari Singh Nalwa's public stand before the Maharaja, a decade before his death, when Ranjit Singh named Kharak Singh as his successor. Precisely, Nalwa, stated, "This state belongs not to an individual, but to the Khalsa commonwealth. It is the sacrifices of a whole people over a century, blessed by the Guru's Grace, that we have won an empire. Let them choose who shall lead them by consensus (*gurmatta*). Kharak Singh is my friend but not able to bear this burden. Let's not fail our people when they need our dispassionate lead most".[54]

Ranjit Singh harnessed the Sikh ideals and instruments to build his Kingdom. It were the Sikh forces that constituted the core of his power and helped him to overrun one principality after another. At times, the Akalis or Nihangs, motivated by highest religious zeal as at Kangra, Multan and Naushahra carried out the most difficult tasks.

But Ranjit Singh used Sikhism for tactical purposes. His commitment to the faith of his birth was only skin deep. He also had deep distrust, if not contempt, for his confederal cohorts. Without realising the basics of his power and the fundamentals of his state, he passed on the levers of power to the hands of Dogras and Brahmins, and that too from outside the Punjab. They were infiltrators and had a longstanding animus against the Khalsa. That made him to err grievously.[55]

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To quote a few instances.

* He subjected himself to punishment at Akal Takht in 1802 for his affair with the Muslim dancing girl Moran, by publicly bearing his back to receive stripes (at the hands of Akali Phula Singh who however, after tying him to a tamarind tree waived the punishment) but neither gave up the dancing girls nor his debaucheries till the very last.[56]
* The way he swept aside the old Sikh confederates made him all the more suspicious of the established leadership of the Khalsa. He neither sought to co-opt them into the system, nor work out a new leadership pattern from amongst them. He kept the Sikhs especially the Jats his cohorts, even Sandhanwalias his collaterals, far away from his establishment. The void in his administration was filled by the mass scale induction of upper caste Hindus especially Brahmins and Dogras and that too from outside Punjab, and even European mercenaries who came to hold high operative positions.
* His choice of Dogra Rajput Dhian Singh to the highest office of Prime Minister and conferring upon him, his two brothers Gulab Singh and Suchet Singh, and his son Hira Singh the title of Raja (the only ones to be conferred that title by Ranjit Singh) and permitting them to maintain their own army of about 8000 men (separate from that of Maharaja) with a strong park of artillery - 22 pieces besides camel guns -showed his utter lack of judgement. They had all the paraphernalia of sovereignty, a far sounder financial position, a secure territory in Gulab Singh's Governorship of Jammu, and limitless patronage in Dhian Singh's Prime Ministership. The Dogra brothers with Gulab Singh serving as conduit were in league from 1820s with the English, who cast their covetous eyes at least from 1831 onwards on Ranjit Singh's Kingdom after his death. Ranjit Singh's poor judgement was further compounded by his reposing trust in pedestrian Purbia Gaur Brahmins from Meerut, namely Khushhali Ram (Khushhal Singh) his brother Ram Lal (Ram Singh) and nephew Tej Ram (Tej Singh) three of the five persons in all converted by him to Sikhism - and placing them in high offices, so much so that Tej Singh rose to be Commander-in-Chief of the Sikh forces. They were, to say the least, snakes in the grass. Both these groups excelled each other in dismantling Ranjit Singh's kingdom, a meritorious act as laid down by Chanakaya. In sharp contrast, were the Faqir brothers, the Foreign Minister Azizuddin, the Interior Minister Nuruddin and Faujdar Imaduddin, sons of a well known Lahore physician and a man of God, Syed Ghulam Mohammad Bukhari. The trust reposed in them was not misused. They proved to be men of character.
* Ranjit Singh caused irreparable damage to Sikhism by his dismantling of the traditional management apparatus at Harimandir at Amritsar and collateral shrines. The taking over of the management of the shrines by the state authorities in 1824 was destructive of the Sikh values and later paved the way for the British take over and management of the, shrines.
* Ranjit Singh did make offerings to Harimandir and other Sikh shrines, besides land grants. But there was nothing exceptional in that. He made similar grants to Hindu and Muslim shrines. If he got the exterior of Harimandir gold plated, he got Vishwanath Temple of Benaras similarly goldplated with six quintals of gold; and also the interior ceiling of Jawala Mukhi temple in Kangra with four quintals of gold. In all, he donated 16 quintal of gold to Hindu Temples.[57] It is another matter that the Brahminical greed later removed the gold plating from the temples for misappropriation, and that of Harimandir gave it the name of Golden Temple.
* Ranjit Singh during his entire rule never sought to know what was pure or original Sikhism, much less make arrangements to preach it or organise studies and research in Sikh history or theology. He was not unaware of Baba Dayal's initiating the Nirankari movement in 1815 seeking to rid Sikhism of Brahminical accretions, violative of teachings of the Sikh Gurus. He

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turned his blind eye towards it. Rather by his whims, fancies and superstitions, he strengthened the position of Brahminism and their occult sciences, so much so that the whole population including Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims were deeply steeped in that. The Bedis and Sodhis - the descendents of the Gurus - whom he patronised too mentally belonged to the same class, and they sought for themselves identical if not still better privileges like the Brahmins. They were far from being faithful adherents of traditional Sikhism.

* Verily, Victor Jacquemont on a visit to Punjab wrote in 1830, "He is a Sikh by profession, a sceptic in reality." Around the same time W.L.M'Gregor, of Ludhiana Agency opined, "With regard to Ranjit's own religious character, it is somewhat doubtful if he has any fixed system." And to cap it, W.G. Osborne who met Ranjit Singh in 1838 opined, "Though he is by profession a soldier, in religion he is really a sceptic, and it is difficult to say whether his superstition is real or a mask assumed to gratify and conciliate his people."[58]
* Ranjit Singh's relations with the English left much to be desired. He had developed a mental blockage after observing the quality of discipline of English forces of Lord Lake pursuing Jaswant Rao Holkar upto the Beas, following the English occupation of Delhi in 1803. It is another matter that Ranjit Singh helped Holkar to get honourable terms.[59] Ranjit Singh's positive response to the English plea for cooperation in 1803 stipulating his being recognised sovereign of all Sikh chiefs west of Sutlej was a thoughtless blunder. His subsequent efforts in 1806-09 to extend his sway over cis-Sutlej chiefs were misconstrued. The cis-Sutlej chiefs looked for and were granted protection by the English who despatched a detachment of troops under Lt. Col. David Octerlony in the area. Ranjit Singh had nothing but to yield. That was formalised by the Treaty of Amritsar (on April 25, 1809), which confined Ranjit Singh to the west of Sutlej (he was permitted to keep his territory east of the Sutlej with fewer troops). That formalised split of the Sikh nation at Sutlej.[60] And, instead of confining the effects of treaty from Ropar to Ferozepur, Ranjit Singh accepted the course of river all along down to Sind. That reflected his intellectual bankruptcy and that of his advisers.
* Ranjit Singh felt handicapped in annexing Sind which he could have done in 1813-16 when English were involved in wars of aggrandisement. He strictly followed the treaty and behaved as if he was in need of English permission. The English on their part did not prohibit Syed Ahmed Barelvi's marshalling Muslims of India for *Jehad* against Ranjit Singh, which kept his forces pinned down during 1827-31. During this period, they also developed secret entente with Dogras of Ranjit Singh's Darbar, with Raja Gulab Singh of Jammu serving as a conduit.
* In 1830s, the English confined Ranjit Singh on all sides. By commercial treaties of 1832 and 1835, he was forced to admit that river Indus from its confluence with Sutlej at Mithankot was under English protection. Again, under Tripartite Agreement of 1838 with English and Shah Shujah, he was forced to concede similar English interests in Afghanistan. The English did not want him to extend either northwards or westwards towards Jalalabad across Peshawar. In deference to their wishes, he did not develop his relations with Nepal.
* After being befooled at Ropar in 1831 at his meeting with Governor General Lord William Bentinck, he permitted Capt Wade, English resident at Ludhiana, a lot of liberties, that he virtually functioned as a British resident in a native state. Wade developed a network of agents at all places.
* Ranjit Singh could not even have divided his kingdom as suggested by Dr. Gupta among his successors and sought English protection,[61] as Dogras and English had teamed up to destroy his institutions. Capt Wade's (February 1838) taking due note of Dogra aspirations in Jammu and beyond was sinister.[62]

* The five week visit of Lord Auckland in 1838 was designed to accelerate his death which was expected any time after his suffering paralytic stroke in 1834. When Auckland left on December 31, 1838, Ranjit could barely lift his eyebrows and was a dying man.

The English expected Ranjit Singh's Kingdom to fall to them like a ripe fruit. Or, in other words, Ranjit Singh was presiding over the liquidation of his kingdom. The constitution of his cabinet consisting of Dhian Singh Dogra as Prime Minister, Jemadar Khushhal Singh Misr, Raja Suchet Singh Dogra, Faqir Azizuddin, Faqir Nuruddin and Pandit Dina Nath of Kashmir gave preponderance to a Dogra-Brahmin combine which was looking for an opportunity to administer coup de grace to the political ascendancy of the Khalsa.

How far Ranjit Singh had gone astray from Sikhism could be judged by the fact that four Hindu Ranis and seven slave girls on his death committed *sati*, a practice positively frowned upon by the Sikh Gurus and repugnant to Sikh traditions. Raja Dhian Singh committed the farce of rushing towards Ranjit Singh's pyre to show his loyalty and being prevented from doing so. In this manner he camouflaged his fraudulent intentions which were clear even before Ranjit Singh's pyre had gone cool.[63]

XIII

After Ranjit Singh, followed the dance of death. The Dogras, the Purbia Brahmins and the English combined to make a short shrift of his carefully built kingdom. Ranjit Singh's heirs proved no match to counter the treachery they faced all around.[64] And, the army had its own limitations in throwing up a motivated leadership from amongst itself. It was herein that the absence of Hari Singh Nalwa and of Fateh Singh Ahluwalia both of whom died in 1837 was badly felt.

It is common for historians to say that Kharak Singh, who succeeded Ranjit Singh was "an inefficient, imbecile and morally uninspiring" though at the same time, it is admitted that he had taken a decisive step in dismissing General Sultan Mahmood from artillery "for his confirmed drunkenness."[65] Didn't he have the right to constitute his government? But Raja Dhian Singh thought that the office of Prime Ministership had been mortgaged to him or the Dogras in perpetuity, and he had rather a right to improve upon it! His attitude towards the new Maharaja was overbearing and full of contempt. This was quite discernible when he marshalled other Sardars to make the Maharaja take an oath on the *Adi Granth* that their Jagirs would remain intact. Kharak Singh did so without hesitation. But that made Dhian Singh Dogra's positions suspect.

Kharak Singh appointed the young Chet Singh Bajwa as his principal adviser on political affairs. He prohibited the entry of Dhian Singh and his son Hira Singh into his *Zenana* (or private chambers). He also administered a snub in public Darbar at the reports about Raja Gulab Singh's removing "property and money from the forts of the Minawar district to Jammu". These proved his undoing.

Raja Dhian Singh Dogra in a carefully laid plot secretly convened a Council of eleven consisting of Kharak Singh's Maharani Chand Kaur, his son Kanwar Naunihal Singh, the four Sandhanwalia Sardars - Attar Singh, Kehar Singh, Lehna Singh and Kanwar Sher Singh - the three Dogra Chiefs - himself, his son Raja Hira Singh and Rai Kesari Singh of Jammu and a representative of Gulab Singh - besides Misr Lal Singh and Alexander Gardener.[66] He placed before it forged secret communications bearing the royal seal sent by Chet Singh to the British offering 6 annas per

rupee i.e. 37.5 per cent of revenue and accept English supremacy, disband the Sikh army and do away with the Sardars to be replaced by English Officers.[67] This resulted in a unanimous decision to deprive Kharak Singh of executive powers and confer the same on Kanwar Naunihal Singh, and assassinate Chet Singh.

On October 9, 1839, barely three months after Ranjit Singh's death, the conspirators forced their entry into the Lahore fort, after killing the guards and whoever chose to come their way. Dogra Dhian Singh plunged his dagger twice into the heart of Chet Singh Bajwa disregarding his pathetic appeals and that of Kharak Singh who was taken into custody and confined to his palace.

That was the first step in the ascendancy of Dogra Dhian Singh who virtually emerged as the King-maker, and firmed up his grip over the Darbar.

The English historians are near unanimous that had Naunihal Singh succeeded Ranjit Singh who liked his grandson very much, the Kingdom could be firmed up and expanded. But that does not explain away the Dogra-English contumacy, now almost a decade old, and the English's putting Ranjit Singh's kingdom to quarantine on all sides.

Naunihal Singh, a soldier from the childhood and trained under Hari Singh Nalwa, certainly had a mind of his own. He distrusted both the Dogras and the English. His cabinet of six - Dhian Singh, Faqir Azizuddin, Jem Khushhal Singh, Bhai Ram Singh, Lehna Singh Majithia and Ajit Singh Sandhanwalia - was a balanced one. He established posts ringing the territories of Gulab Singh Dogra, Governor of Jammu, who had not paid revenue due to the state for sometime. He humbled the Raja of Mandi for raising the standard of revolt. Above all, at his instance, the British government replaced Capt Wade, political agent at Ludhiana, who was indulging in court intrigues and playing one faction against the other, by Mr. dark. The English, however, extracted the concession, (at the instance of Dhian Singh Dogra from Kharak Singh in detention because Naunihal Singh would not have agreed to that) permitting the returning troops from Ghazni a route through Punjab, which Ranjit Singh had earlier refused.

Kharak Singh was administered dozes of white lead in wine at the instance of Dhian Singh and expired on November 5, 1840.[68] At the only meeting between Naunihal Singh and his father, a day earlier, the two only traded insults, bruising each other, heart and soul. Kharak Singh's two Hindu *ranis* and 11 maids were dragged to his funeral pyre. They showered nothing but curses on Naunihal Singh and Dhian Singh for the gruesome treatment meted to them.

After the funeral the same day, when Naunihal Singh, holding the hands of Mian Udham Singh, Gulab Singh's eldest son, entered the Roshni gate, fragments of an upper wall of the archway, as pre-arranged, gave way. Udham Singh died on the spot while Naunihal Singh was bruised. Suddenly, as pre-ordained, a palanquin appeared and took Naunihal Singh to the fort.[69] Dhian Singh stopped Lehna Singh Majithia from following the palanquin. He similarly prevented other Sardars and even the bewailing Maharani Chand Kaur, mother of Naunihal Singh, from entering into the fort. Naunihal Singh's head was battered immediately and he died.

Two hours later, Dhian Singh Dogra informed Chand Kaur of her son's death. He then blackmailed her to keep it a secret till the time was opportune for him to make it public. He did not leave her without extracting the promise. The news was kept secret for three days. That he thought was the minimum requirement to keep the Sardars and the Army off balance. Meanwhile, he sent

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for Prince Sher Singh from Mukerian. But his pleadings to raise him to the throne were not approved by the Sardars. Maharani Chand Kaur with the help of Sadhanwalias, who were deadly opposed to the Dogras, prevailed.

The Dogras now as a part of a deep conspiracy split into two groups with Raja Gulab Singh espousing the cause of Maharani Chand Kaur, and Raja Dhian Singh that of Sher Singh.

In terms of a plan worked out before hand, Sher Singh marched on Lahore on January 14, 1841, and *panchas* or deputies of Khalsa troops, who had increasingly come to exercise power, extended their support to him. They were led to believe that Chand Kaur like Kharak Singh earlier had offered the English 37.50 per cent of revenue to keep herself in power. Suchet Singh Dogra and General Ventura also joined Sher Singh, tilting the balance in his favour. After three days of bombardment of the city, Maharani Chand Kaur surrendered the fort to Sher Singh who emerged as King on January 18, 1841.

As part of the settlement, Chand Kaur was granted a Jagir worth 9 lakhs of rupees in Jammu to be administered by Raja Gulab Singh! Under another stipulation to permit Dogra troops to leave the fort and the capital unmolested, Gulab Singh carried away all the money and valuables not only belonging to Maharani Chand Kaur but also to the Lahore Darbar to Jammu for safe custody. In one day he took away Rs. 80 lakhs (8 mn) worth of cash, gold and jewels of the state treasury.[70] Attar Singh and Ajit Singh Sandhanwalia fled to British territory, while Lehna Singh was taken into custody.

Sher Singh reappointed Dhian Singh Dogra as Prime Minister. A much notable event of his regime was expedition under Generals Meehan Singh, Zorawar Singh, Dhian Singh, and Gulab Singh against Baltistan which took the Maharaja's forces right upto Lhasa, capital of Tibet. A treaty of perpetual friendship, non-interference and non-aggression was signed between King Sher Singh, the Emperor of China and the Dalai Lama of Tibet. The Sikh forces withdrew. The English were rather alarmed at the advance of the Sikh forces and felt that war with them was inevitable.

Sher Singh, to put an end to internal schism, sent, through Baba Bikram Singh Bedi, a word to Chand Kaur agreeing to marry her. Gulab Singh, afraid of losing the Jagir and ill-gotten wealth, worked on her brother Chanda Singh Kanahaya of Fatehgarh to dissuade his sister from doing so, as Sher Singh allegedly wanted to finish her. She succumbed to the pressure of her brother. On the midnight of June 11, 1842 at the instance of Dhian Singh Dogra, her skull was crushed with a grindstone by her maids who themselves were put to death later in the day. Maharaja Sher Singh, on tour at Sialkot, was informed of her death four days later.

Now, the English stepped in with their grand design. At the instance of their political agent at Ludhiana, Mr. dark, the Maharaja released Lehna Singh Sandhanwalia from prison while Attar Singh and Ajit Singh were permitted to return to the kingdom. They made great show of their loyalty. Bikram Singh Bedi also interceded on their behalf. Cunningham suggests that Maharaja Sher Singh needed a counterweight to Dhian Singh Dogra.

They proved wily intriguers, working to a design as laid by the English. Lord Ellenborough wrote on May 11, 1843, "The breakup of the Punjab will probably begin with murder."[71] Finding Sher Singh drunk, they got the warrants of Dhians Singh's death signed by the Maharaja and showed those to Dhian Singh who signed the death warrants of the Maharaja on September 15, 1843. Ajit

Singh shot Sher Singh and then chopped off his head, while Lehna Singh killed the heir-apparent Partab Singh, aged 12. Thereafter they shot dead Dhian Singh. Their plan to put to death Suchet Singh and Hira Singh Dogra could not materialise. That sealed their fate.

Hira Singh Dogra now marshalled the Sikh troops to punish the perpetrators of the triple murder. Latif feels that the Sikh soldiers should have shown discretion and judgement, and sided with Sandhanwalia Sardars, and not Hira Singh Dogra who should have been arrested. That would have helped to restore calm and strengthen the state.[72] But Sandhanwalia Sardars should instead have concentrated their ire only on the Dogras. As it was, Hira Singh stormed the fort and killed Lehna Singh. Ajit Singh too met the same fate. Later, he pursued and killed Prince Kashmira Singh and Attar Singh Sandhanwalia.

Daleep Singh, 5, was proclaimed Maharaja with Raja Hira Singh Dogra as Prime Minister, and Rani Jindan or Jind Kaur, Dalip's mother as the Regent. Hira Singh's tutor Pandit Jalla emerged as a centre of power though he was the greatest opponent of Dogras. It was at the instance of Jalla that Hira Singh got his uncle Suchet Singh murdered.

Hira Singh was a spoilt child and a product of Ranjit Singh's munificence. Gulab Singh now suggested to him to take over the state as Maharaja with Suchet Singh as Prime Minister.[73] He also wanted his territory to be vastly increased, but the vigilance of army *panchas* prevented that.

Hira Singh and Gulab Singh had a joint plan but kept up their facade of pursuing contradictory courses. Jalla overreached himself when he attacked the character of Rani Jindan who appealed to the army *panchas* to protect her honour from Jalla-Hira Singh combine. The army rose, pursued the fleeing Jalla and Hira Singh, and on December 21, 1844, killed both of them. Jawahar Singh, brother of Maharani took over as Prime Minister with Misr Lal Singh, her favourite courier (or her paramour) as his principal adviser.

Gulab Singh declared himself independent, but the Sikh forces severely punished the Dogra forces. He asked for forgiveness in most abject terms and promised to pay a tribute of 35 lakhs in fine (Rs. 27 lakhs in cash, the rest in mere promises). On his return to Jammu, he resumed his negotiations with the English and incited tribals and others to revolt against the Sikh kingdom.

Shortly afterwards. Prince Peshaura Singh and Jawahar Singh met their end in internecine intrigues[74]. The Khalsa Darbar was in a pathetic state, and at one time Gulab Singh, despite his earlier detestable activity, was asked to take over as Prime Minister which he declined.

The Sikh soldiers by now had gained a dominant position and started calling themselves Panth Khalsaji or *Sarbat Khalsa*, the body of the elect. In the words of Sir Henry Hardinge, "It was a democratic revolution so successfully accomplished by the Sikh army."[75] But instead of effecting a putsch and taking over the government, the soldiers or their *panchas* lacked a towering personality from amongst themselves to establish a republic or run the government in the name of Maharaja. Lehna Singh Majithia left the state and went on pilgrimage to Haridwar. Sham Singh Attariwala whose daughter had been married to Kanwar Naunihal Singh remained aloof, distraught at the developments. There was no precedent. The *Misls* failure to establish a republic, actualising a unitary Commonwealth of Sikh States was a handicap. There was no intellectual interaction with Europe much less America, to take inspiration from the French or American experiments.

Consequently, the Khalsa army was content with Rani Jindan holding regular Court, and reposed its confidence in her. She brought in two mercenary *misrs*, Lal Singh and Tej Singh of Meerut as Prime Minister and Commander-in-Chief respectively.

These two and Raja Gulab Singh now for a long time were in league with the English. Verily, "these were men of doubtful character - soldiers of fortune and without background of loyalty to any cause or being sticklers for morality or decency in public life. "They never imbibed the ethos of the Sikh nation" of which they were not an integral part for any length of time.[76] Rani Jindan who in the words of Lord Hardinge "appears before the troops and the public and has laid aside her debaucheries along with her veil" was no less responsible for playing into the hands of intriguers at her court for following the disastrous course.

The English had been avidly looking towards the annexation of the Sikh kingdom. They had made a series of moves - political, administrative and military. These included causing havoc in Lahore Darbar and winning over those in high position.

The English indulged in a series of provocations.[77] Cunningham considers these as sufficient cause for the Sikhs "to strike in self-defence". The Khalsa was not ready for war. But the agents provocateurs, who in this case were in occupation of high offices of Prime Minister and Commander-in-Chief, were most vociferous. They, in the words of Lord Hardinge, the Governor General, "egged the army to war." According to the English design, they were the first to betray the interest of the Khalsa.[78] The first Anglo-Sikh war was, all along, marred by treachery, betrayal and infidelity, the forces of Khalsa faced at the hands of Brahmins and Dogras who were looking for an opportunity to administer such a stab in the back to the Sikh political ascendancy. Rani Jindan played a despicable role. Her government had no intention to win even by default.

The Khalsa force under the command of two *misrs*, Lal Singh and Tej Singh, who proved the arch-traitors, crossed the Sutlej and entrenched themselves in their own territory in the second week of December 1845. Tej Singh knew that "much of the artillery munition had been tempered with and rendered useless."

Tej Singh and Lal Singh conveyed to the local English authorities their "secret and efficient goodwill". Lal Singh sought instructions from the English political agent, Capt Nicholson, and acted accordingly.

According to Ludlow, "Had he (Tej Singh) attacked, our garrison of 8,000 men (at Ferozepur) would have been destroyed and the victorious 60,000 would have fallen on Sir Hardinge who had then but 8,000."[79] The advice of Capt. Nicholson to divide the Sikh forces, delay the attack as far as possible, and leave the forces leaderless at the height of battle was accepted by these treacherous *misr* commanders. Even then in the battle of Mudki on December 21, 1845, the forces of the Khalsa, betrayed by its commander, put up an unexpected tough fight, causing consternation in the English forces. Commander-in-Chief, General Gough was relegated, and Hardinge himself took the command of the field. The English even thought of "unconditional surrender."

The following day, Tej Singh commander of the Sikh reserve, delayed the action, permitted the forces under Lal Singh to be worsted, let the English force to realign themselves, and only thereafter committed his troops to the battle. Just when the English artillery ammunition had failed, Tej Singh fled the battlefield and turned certain victory into a setback. The English were given

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almost a month to regroup. Even then Ranjodh Singh Majithia crossed the Sutlej, intercepted and miserably mauled the English forces at Badowal. But he failed to take advantage of his excellent move. The Governor General and Commander-in-Chief (both present in the field) "trembled for the safety of their siege train and convoys of munition." Tej Singh and Lal Singh shrank within themselves. And, Gulab Singh Dogra, who was in league with the English for atleast a decade and a half, now arrived at Lahore on January 27, 1846, to bail them out and strike mortal blows at the Khalsa.

Cunningham vouchsafes that fresh understanding was reached by Tej Singh and Gulab Singh with the English for an unopposed crossing of the Sutlej and laying bare the road to Lahore.[80] Lal Singh passed on valuable information to Lord Hardinge at Ferozepur. Gulab Singh stopped rations to troops who lived on parched gram and raw carrots. They also ran short of ammunition which too was withheld at his instance. The deputation of troops to the wretched Rani Jindan at Lahore met with abuse. Gulab Singh garrisoned Lahore with his troops who throughout the war did not fire a single shot at the English.

It was under these circumstances that Sham Singh Attariwala, living in isolation, draped in a mourning white, reached the scene of battle. He swore on the *Adi Granth* before the troops, not to return alive if the nation was defeated.

The parameters of the battle of Sabraon on February 10, 1846, had been fixed by the English and the treacherous commander of the Khalsa army. The three attacks launched by the English met with stunning losses. Tej Singh and Lal Singh deserted the victorious troops, leaving them leaderless. They, instead, destroyed the pontoon bridge on the Sutlej and planted 10 guns not to let the Khalsa troops cross back alive. Victory was turned into defeat.

Sham Singh Attariwala riding a white mare called for a frontal attack and for piercing through the enemy ranks. The Sikhs met a heroic death, with Attariwala's body riddled with seven bullets. Shah Muhammad sang of the glory of the Sikh fight. So did Lord Hardinge." And, Cunningham movingly pointed out that "no Sikh offered to submit and no son of Gobind asked for quarter."[82]

As pre-arranged, the English forces crossed the Sutlej near Ferozepur on the night of February 10-11, 1846, and were offered entry into Lahore, where the sovereign formally submitted.

The 16-article Treaty of Amritsar March 9, 1846, inter alia transferred Jalandhar Doab to the English who were permitted to keep a force at Lahore for one year 'to protect the person of Maharaja and the inhabitants'; and, in a dubious manner recognised Raja Gulab Singh independent ruler of Jammu and Kashmir (on payment of Rs. 10 mn towards indemnity of Rs. 15 million fixed for the Khalsa Darbar) in recognition of his services which included starving Khalsa army of rations and munitions.

Sardar K.M. Panikkar, the doyen of modern Hindu untraditional historiography, (who will be heard of again for his role in Akali movement (1920-25), and reorganisation of states in independent India), in his *Founding of the Kashmir State* (Alien & Unwin, 1953) justified Gulab Singh's treachery of the forces of the Khalsa. Gulab Singh, from the Hindu viewpoint, had performed a great task of causing irreparable damage atleast to the political aspirations of the Khalsa, the destruction of which was uppermost in the mind of caste-ridden hill chiefs right from 1699.

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Lal Singh and Tej Singh who tried to carve out for themselves independent dominions were not amply rewarded. Both of them, however, were reappointed to their jobs. Lal Singh manoeuvered to prevent transfer of Kashmir to Gulab Singh. That cost him his job and his Jagirs. He was banished from the realm.

The English manoeuvered to obtain a request from the Lahore Darbar for continuation of their occupation. The Treaty of Bhairowal of December 16, 1846, provided for the continuation of the English Resident "with full authority to direct and control all members in every department of the states." Rani Jindan was pensioned off (Rs. 1.5 lakhs a year) and the Council of Regency (comprising Tej Singh, Sher Singh Attariwala, Dewan Dina Nath, Fakir Nuruddin, Ranjodh Singh Majithia, Bhai Nidhan Singh, Attar Singh Kalianwale and Shamsher Singh Sandhanwalia) reconstituted under the English resident - Henry Lawrence who was replaced by Frederick Currie in March 1848. The subjugation was complete. The English now emerged as regents of Prince Dalip Singh, now 10 years old.

The Multan incident of the humiliating treatment meted to Mulraj who was popular with soldiers - Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus - and uprising of troops, and the activity of Raja Sher Singh and of his lather Chattar Singh whose daughter was engaged to Dalip Singh, was, firstly, directed against Lahore Darbar, and, secondly, a small affair which was deliberately allowed to take big dimensions. That made Lord Dalhousie on October 5, to declare war against "the Sikh nation". The British Resident who was looking for such a crisis was rather puzzled as he was the administrator of the Council of Regency.

Lord Gough fought the bloodiest battle of his life at Challianwala in Gujrat district on January 13, 1849, against Sher Singh when he lost 2331 men. Shortly afterwards Multan fell to the forces of Lahore Darbar. In the final battle on February 21, 1849, at Gujarat, Chattar Singh and Sher Singh too lost. They laid down their arms only on March 14, at Mankiala near Rawalpindi.

Dalhousie was clear about annexing the Punjab. Henry Lawrence told the Council of Regency not to protest. They were assured of their Jagirs! They persuaded the 11 year old Maharaja to follow suit. He was granted pension of half a million rupees per annum if he remained loyal. Punjab was annexed on March 29, 1849.

Thus ended in fiasco the Sikh quest for sovereignty. The Khalsa lost political power to Chanakyaniti of Brahmins.

Vigilance, it is well said, is the eternal price paid for the maintenance of liberty. The lack of Sikh vigilance against Brahminical infiltration in the wake of Abdali's numerous invasions splintered the Sikhs socially, prevented consolidation of Sikh power in the hour of their triumph under the *misls*, and caused dent in Sikh theology. By 1849, Brahminism had not only shattered the Sikh political aspirations but also shaken the foundations of Sikhism to its core. Sikhism was now in a state of great perturbation.

Footnotes:

1. The interval provided the Khalsa the necessary breather. It was also possibly utilised to spread the word about the mission entrusted to Banda Singh by Guru Gobind Singh.
2. Samana, a prosperous town, built like a fortress, fell after three days, leaving 10,000 dead. Jalal-ud-din, Shashal Beg, and Bashal Beg, the executioners of Guru Tegh Bahadur, and the two younger sons of Guru Gobind Singh.
3. This vocabulary was later picked up by Hindu historians, especially Sir Jadu Nath Sarkar, the doyen of this period. Some Sikh chroniclers, thoughtlessly, picked up stories about Banda's bloodcurdling exploits.
4. Attributed to Guru Gobind Singh, the couplet forms part of Bhai Nand Lal's *Tankhah Nama* (Code of Conduct) for a member of the Khalsa. The full couplet reads "Khalsa shall rule, and no one will challenge their authority. Humiliated in defeat, all will join their ranks and he alone will be saved who seeks their refuge." Cf. Ganda Singh, "How the Sikh Raj Came About", *Punjab Past and Present* (hereinafter *PP&P*) Vol. XV, October 1981, p. 433.
5. The Persian inscription on Banda Singh Bahadur's coins was as follows:

   Obverse

   Sikka zad har do alam tegh-i-Nanak wahib ast
   fateh Gobind Singh Shah-i-shahan fazl-i-sacha sahib ast
   Coinstruck for the two worlds with the sword of Nanak, and victory granted by the grace of Gobind Singh, King of Kings, and the true Emperor.

   Reverse

   zarb ba aman-ud-dahar masavarat sahar
   zinat-ut-Takhat-i-Mubarak Bakht
   Struck in the haven of refuge, the beautiful city, the ornament of the blessed throne.
   The inscription on Banda's seal become a model for future inscriptions on Sikh coins and seals:
   degh o tegh of fateh o nusrat-i-bedrang
   yaft az Nanak guru Gobind Singh
   Through hospitality and the sword to unending victory granted by Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh.
6. William Irvine, *Later Mughals*, (Calcutta, 1922), Vol I, pp. 98-99.
7. Ganda Singh, "Banda Singh Bahadur, His Achievements and Place of His Execution", *PP&P*, Vol IX, October 1975, pp. 460-67.
8. It is debatable whether the Sikhs under Banda Singh at that time "could have captured Delhi and Lahore and so changed the course of Indian history" as suggested by Khushwant Singh. Cf *A History of the Sikhs*, (Princeton, 1963), Vol I, p. 109.
9. Ganda Singh, n. 7, p. 453.
10. For text. Ibid, pp. 453-54.
11. For detailed account, Ibid, pp. 457-58. Banda Singh had prophesied that "Whoever kills me in whatever way will meet the same fate," Farrukhsiyar was blinded by Sayyad brothers in 1719, kept for two months in a dungeon with a bow strung around his neck to torture him, and in the end strangled to death.
12. In the post-Banda period, those associated with him constituted. Bandei Khalsa which came into conflict with Tat Khalsa. The Bandei Khalsa led by Amar Singh Mahant of Khem Karan sought to raise Banda's vegetarianism, wearing of red coloured clothes and adoption of salutation of *fateh darshan*, victory to the presence. The Tat Khalsa led by Bhai Kahan Singh son of Binod Singh wanted to follow the ideals of Guru Gobind Singh in their purity, non-vegetarianism, wearing of blue clothes, as form of dress, and the traditional Sikh salutation *waheguru ji ka Khalsa*, *waheguru ji ki fateh* (The Khalsa belongs to God, Victory be to Him). The

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unsavoury manner in which the dispute was resolved in favour of Tat Khalsa, led to the eclipse of Banda Singh Bahadur himself. The Sikhs now started playing down his role. That gave fillip to certain elements including some Sikh chroniclers to contend that Banda Singh Bahadur was not even a baptised Sikh.

13. Muhammad Hadi Kamwar Khan, a royal courtier in his *Tazkirat-us-Salatin-i-Chughta* completed in 1723, details the names and class of Hindus admitted into the administration at various levels. See also, Muzaffar Alam, *The Crisis of Empire in Mughal Northern India*, *Awadh and Punjab*, 1707-1748 (Delhi, 1986), Chapters on Punjab and ad passim.
14. In the course of time, as Jawaharlal Nehru writes, from Nehr, the family came to be known as Kaul-Nehru, and later it dropped Kaul, to emerge as Nehrus.

    Jawaharlal Nehru starts his *Autobiography*, 1936 (Delhi, 1980 reprint, p. 1) on a note of untruth when he writes that Farrukhsiyar in 1716 brought his ancestor Raj Kaul, allegedly a great scholar in Sanskrit and Persian, from Kashmir and made him the land grant at Andha Mughal, a Delhi suburb. All historians agree that Farrukhsiyar never visited Kashmir. Cf. M.J. Akbar, *Jawaharlal Nehru, A Biography.* (Delhi. 1989), p. 4.
15. Bhai Mani Singh who was Diwan of Guru Gobind Singh in 1690s had taken over Harimandir shrine at Amritsar in mid-1699 from *Minas*. After initiating the *amrit prachar*, administration of Khalsa baptism, to the people of Majha, he had come back to Anandpur.

    According to some *hukamnamahs*, Bhai Mani Singh was heading the shrine in 1716. He spent the period of worst persecution in post 1716 period at village Baganwala in Jhang district.

    According to popular belief, he again took over the administration of Harimandir around 1720 at the instance of Mata Sundari, wife of Guru Gobind Singh.
16. Though *Adi Granth*, the holy scripture of the Sikhs, had been shown right from the first decade of 17th century, a high degree of reverence, it was not the forma! Guru, which after Guru Arjan devolved on his son Hargobind and thereafter to his successors till the abolition of Guruship in 1708, when it devolved for all times on the holy book. It was reserved for Bhai Mani Singh to remove this dichotomy from the contemporary Sikh mind. That was not a mean task.

16a Bhai Mani Singh's theological parameters were very clear. He made a fine distinction between *bhagat bani* and *gurubani*. The hymns of *Bhaktas* -Hindus, downcastes and outcastes, and muslims - of various schools of thought was *bhagat bani* and was to be shown an equal degree of reverence. But the Sikhs were to ordain their life in accordance with *Gurbani* - the" compositions of Guru Nanak and his successors. This distinction got blurred in the second half of eighteenth century after the martyrdom of Bhai Mani Singh and death of Nawab Kapur Singh.

17. Surjit Singh Gandhi, *Struggle of the Sikhs for Sovereignty*, (Delhi 1980), p. 62. It was this aspect of the Hindu offensive that was resumed after Indian independence in 1947.
18. Ibid, p. 65.
19. Ibid, pp. 65-66; Gopal Singh, *A History of the Sikh People*, *1469-1988*, (Delhi, 1988), p. 366. Kapur Singh was the only Sikh to have accepted the Muslim title of Nawab.
20. With the passing away of Jathedar Darbara Singh, the leadership wholly fell to Kapur Singh.
21. Their centres were at Ramsar, Bibeksar, Lachhmansar, Kaulsarand Santokhsar in Amritsar. Each had its own banner and drum. All had a common mess to begin with. This was later separated because of practical necessity. They had a common store for clothing and other necessities, and had a common treasury.
22. Cf. Rattan Singh Bhangu, *Prachin Panth Parkash* (Ed. Bhai Vir Singh, Amritsar, 1914), p. 216.
23. *Nawab Kapur Singh*, Ludhiana, Sikh Missionary College, n.d. p. 18.
24. *Bhai Sahib Bhai Mani Singh ji*, (Ludhiana, Sikh Missionary College, n.d.), p. 19.

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25. *Bhat Vehi Multani Sindhi*, reproduced in Ibid, p. 20 See also, Koer Singh *Gurbilas Patshahi* 10, (1751), p. 294.
26. Bhagat Singh," Faizalpuria or Singhpura Misl" in *PP&P*, Vol XX, October, 1986, p. 304.
27. Gandhi, n. 17, p. 75.
28. The dialogue is based on Ahmad Shah Butalia's report, the last line of which reads, "It seems probably that these rebels will raise their heads", Khushwant Singh, n. 8, Vol I, p. 126 fn.
29. Ibid, p. 127.
30. Satibir Singh, *Atharvin Sadi Vich Bir Prampra da Vikas*, (Patiala, 1987), p. 136.
31. Cf. Ibid, p. 138.
32. Hari Ram Gupta, *History of the Sikhs* (Delhi 1978), Vol II, p. 68; Gandhi, n. 17, p. 96.
33. K.S. Thapar, "Gurmatta: Democracy in Practice", *PP&P*, Vol IX, October 1975, p. 289.
34. Gupta, n. 32. Vols II & III Gandhi, n. 17, and Dr. Gopal Singh, n. 19, and Satbir Singh, n. 30 are good sources for this period.
35. Ganda Singh, "Character of the Sikhs as seen by Qazi Noor Mohammad", *PP&P*, Vol XV, October 1981, pp. 425-27.
36. It is reprehensible that the text books taught at under-graduate and postgraduate level mention of the Sikhs during the period as marauders, plunderers, robbers, desperadoes, and what not. If it is suggested that the Sikhs robbed the high ups in the administrative hierarchy and distributed the wealth to the poor and needy, a la Robin Hood, that would be a different story and would need some discriminating judgement.

    For instance, the Chinese Communist Party and later the Vietnamese Communists in the 20th century resorted to these very guerrilla tactics to rid their countries of tyrannous governments and foreign domination. But no one in his wildest dream has called them robbers and marauders. Every one has tried to see their tactics, in the context of their ideological commitment.

    In case of the Sikhs in the 18th century, the writers deliberately ignore the ideology of the Khalsa and reduce them as a mere law and order problem. It seems that by perpetuating such inaccuracies in the history of the Punjab during this period, some writers thereof, out of deliberation and design, have been more bigoted than Qazi Noor Mohammad whose passages about the Sikh character and method of warfare they need to read again and again, to regain their objectivity. There have been others who either through sheer lack of application of their faculties of independent judgement, or lack of technique of writing about a guerrilla movement, have acted merely as camp followers. Clearly, there is need to break old shackles in historiography of this period.
37. Dr. Hari Ram Gupta who specialised on this period writes that atleast 25,000 lost their lives under Banda Singh Bahadur. Mughal Governor, Abdul Samad Khan (1713-26) killed not less than twenty thousand, and Zakariya Khan (1726-45) an equal number. Yahya Khan (1746-47) destroyed about 10,000 in the first *ghalughara* (holocaust). Mir Mannu (1748-53) slaughtered more than 30,000. Adeena Beg (1758) put to death atleast 5,000. Ahmad Shah Abdali and his Afghan Governors butchered around 60,000. Abdali's Deputy, Najib-ud-Daula slew nearly 20,000. Petty officials and the public must have cut to pieces another 4,000. This makes a total of two lakhs (200,000). *History of the Sikhs*, Vol II, pp. 255-56. Dr. Gopal Singh puts the number at a little less than a quarter million people decimated in half a century (1710-1767). n. 19, p. 423.
38. The word *misl*, Arabic in origin means equal. Or, possibly it derived its name from the *misl* (file) kept to enter the holdings of various *Jathas*.
39. After 1765, there was no meeting of Sarbat Khalsa or *gurmatta*.
40. Fauja Singh, "The Misaldari Period of Sikh History", *PP&P*, Vol XI, April 1977, pp. 88-92.

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41. Ibid.
42. Gopal Singh, n. 19, p. 433.
43. Cf. Surjit Singh Gandhi, "Maharaja Ranjit Singh and Sikh Religion", *PP&P*, Vol XIV, October 1980, pp. 227-36; A.C. Arora, "Secular Policy of Ranjit Singh", *PP&P*, Vol XXII, April 1988, pp. 150-65; H.R. Gupta, *History of the Sikhs*, Vol V, chapters 25-26 inter alia provide good material for this.

43a. Gurtej Singh, "Koer Singh and the History of the Tenth King," *Abstract of Sikh Studies*, Chandigarh, July 1993, p. 63.

44. Pauris 14-6, Var 41. Bhai Vir Singh, who edited Bhai Gurdas's Vars, thinks that this 41st Var was composed in 1844.
45. Surjit Hans, *A Reconstruction of Sikh History from Sikh Literature*, (Jalandhar, 1988), p. 272.
46. Later it made Hindus to assert that now when Hinduism has come of its own, Khalsa should wind itself up, as it was no longer needed for the purpose for which it allegedly came into being.
47. He had sent such *Khillats* to Delhi and Jaipur rulers too.
48. Gupta, n. 43, Vol V, p. 30.
49. Syad Muhammad Latif, *History of the Punjab*, (Calcutta, 1891), p. 353.
50. Ibid, p. 355.
51. Cf. Fauja Singh, "Maharaja Ranjit Singh - Search for a Scientific North-West Frontier", *PP&P* Vol XIV, October 1980, pp. 118-55.
52. Hari Singh Nalwa. Governor of Peshawar from 1822 till his death in 1837 stuck terror in the Pathans. Pathan women started using the words, "*Haria Rahgle da*" (Hari Singh Nalwa has come) to frighten their erratic children. His death in the battle of Jamraud in 1837 when Raja Dhian Singh Dogra deliberately kept the Maharaja in the dark of his communications depicting, grave situation, to get rid of him (as he was considered a threat to Dogra ascendancy and machinations at the Darbar) was considered a great loss to Lahore Darbar. Gopal Singh, n. 34, pp. 494-95.
53. Of his cabinet of six, two-thirds of them were rank outsiders, having no interest in continuation of his dynasty or kingdom. These were: Raja Dhian Singh Dogra, Prime Minister, his brother Raja Suchet Singh, Pandit Dina Nath from Kashmir, and Misr Khushal Singh of Meerut. Only two Faqir brothers came from Punjab.
54. Gopal Singh, n. 34, p. 488.
55. Cf. J. D. Cunninagham, *History of the Sikhs* 1849 & 1853 (Ed. H.L.O Garrat, 1915 edn.), (Delhi, 1960 reprint) p. 160.
56. He married Gul Begam coming from the same background as Moran in 1833. Atter that he got a harrowing dream of a band of Sikhs dressed in black with dreadful features, speaking harshly to him. He sought the assistance of Brahmins to propitiate the annoyed spirits. That was indicative of Ranjit Singh's deep malaise. Cf. Latif, n. 49, p. 466.
57. Gupta, n. 43, Vol V. pp. 413, 421-24.
58. Ibid, p. 413.
59. The meeting held at Amritsar to consider over the matter was not that of Sarbat Khalsa as some historians have made out. It only involved those closely aligned with Ranjit Singh. Participants were: Ranjit Singh's three ministers - Dewan Mohkam Chand, Faqir Azizuddin, Mian Imaduddin, Ranjit Singh's mother-in-law Sada Kaur and her brother Raja Bhag Singh of Jind, and Fateh Singh Ahluwalia of Kapurthala. Gupta, n. 43, Vol V, p. 213.
60. In the words of Dr. S. N. Sinha, that constituted "a tragedy of Sikh militant. nationalism" and marked the disruption of the great creation of Guru Gobind Singh." *Ranjit Singh*, (Calcutta, 1939), p. 344.

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61. Gupta, n. 43, Vol. V, p. 594-600.
62. Gopal Singh, n. 19, pp. 620-21.
63. Carmichael Smyth, *Ruling Family of Lahore*, quoted in Ibid, p. 502.
64. On top of it, following the British historians, the Indian chroniclers have vied with each other in calling each of his successors illegitimate, idiots, of weak intellect, drunken and sexual maniacs. These had their origin in Ranjit Singh's infatuation for Muslim dancing girl Moran, (which made his wives, mothers of Kharak Singh and Sher Singh and other princes to retire to their parents in disgust) and his debaucheries. Cf. Ibid, pp. 537-38.
65. Ibid, p. 519.
66. Ibid, p. 524.
67. Latif, n. 49, p. 497.
68. Carmichael Smyth quoted in n. 19, p. 527.
69. Colonel Alexander Gardener an American Officer of the Sikh Artillery writes in his *Memoirs* (1898), "Those who carried the palanquin inside were five soldiers of my artillery. Two of them were killed, two fled to their native place out of fear and there has never been any trace of the fifth soldier. The reasons for the murder of two soldiers was that one of them had revealed that when he carried the Kanwar in the palanquin, there was a minor injury above his right ear leaving just a small bloodstain on the pillow. No blood had flown from the wound when the Kanwar was taken out of the palanquin. However, when the room was reopened later, there was the dead body of the Kanwar on a bed sheet with a lot of blood which had flown and coagulated around his skull."

    Dr. Honingberger also sheds light in his book "*Thirty five Years in the East*" on Dhian Singh's perfity in the same vein. Cf. Piara Singh Data, *The Sikh Empire*, (Delhi, 1986), p. 194.
70. According to Lepel Griffin, it was with this money that Gulab Singh later purchased Kashmir from the British in 1846. Cf. Gopal Singh, n. 34, p. 537.
71. Ibid, 547.
72. Latif, n. 49, p. 531.
73. Gopal Singh, n. 19, pp. 539-40.
74. Latif, n. 49, pp. 535-36.
75. Letter dated 30 September 1845, quoted in n. 19, pp. 545-46.
76. Cf. Ibid, p. 550.
77. Carmichael Smyth in Ibid, p. 553.
78. "It has often happened in history that they who incite the innocent, peace loving people to fight whom they call the -enemies' of the nation, turn out to be the agents of the self-same enemy and they who plead for reason and commonsense in times of crises are dubbed traitors and cowards, though they are the only sure and stable friends of the nation." Ibid, p. 551.
79. Ibid, p. 554.
80. It was for these disclosures that Cunningham was removed from political employment. Cf. Cunningham, n. 55, p. 279.
81. Lord Hardinge Governor General wrote, "Policy precluded me from publicly recording my sentiments on the gallantry of our fallen foe or to record the acts of heroism displayed not only individually but also collectively, by the Sikh Sardars and the army, and I declare, were it not from a deep conviction that my country's good required their sacrifice, 1 could have wept to Have witnessed the fatal slaughter of so devoted a body of men." Gopal Singh, n. 19, p. 558.
82. Cunningham, n. 55, p. 284.

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BOOK THREE

THE SIKHS UNDER THE BRITISH

4
Search For Identity
(1849 - 1925)

The loss of political power in 1849 had its concomitant impact on the Sikh faith and ecclesiastical polity. Sikhism was greatly weakened by the exodus of a large body of people who had adopted the Sikh form during the period of Sikh ascendancy for worldly gains, and whose allegiance to its principles and traditions was tenuous. Also, Brahminism had reasserted itself by the rise of Dogras and Brahmins during the last days of Ranjit Singh. Under the cloak of amity, they had surreptitiously pushed idols into the holy precincts of some of the Sikh shrines, overtaking the monotheism of the Sikh Gurus'. The Udasis who controlled these shrines served as Trojan horses; they even otherwise regarded Sikhism as no different from Hinduism in its social milieu.

This affected Sikhism in two ways. One, there was a sharp decrease in Sikh population in Punjab, and their slunking back to Hinduism at an alarming scale. Two, the attendance at Sikh shrines and participation at annual functions fell sharply. The British worked out in 1855 that the Sikhs, who constituted 10 million during Ranjit Singh's time, accounted for only 200,000 in a population of 3 million in the Lahore Division of Punjab. According to 1868 census, they numbered 1.14 million for the whole of Punjab including the cis-Sutlej princely states. Sikhism, in the words of Census Commissioner, Denzil Ibbetson, was "on the decline".

Not unnaturally, a cry went up in the 1850s that Sikhism was on its way out; it fast being absorbed into Hinduism.[2] It was suppressed heavily by the English who unleashed a reign of terror on the Sikhs.[3] This was one of the principal causes of the massive exit of people from Sikhism. It was further weakened by imprisonments and deportations.[4] The Sikhs found themselves leaderless and in a grim crisis of identity. They were in a moral crisis - marked by a state of confusion - politically, religiously, socially and culturally. The Sikhs seemed to be losing their sense of community. Even their religious leaders were not sure about interpretation of their scriptures, their past, and the central question, "What does it mean to be a Sikh?"[5]

With no defined boundaries in terms of religious worship, beliefs and every day life, Sikhism and Hinduism seemed overlapping. The Punjab Administration Report of 1851-52 surmised that of the old Khalsa, the followers of Guru Nanak would hold their ground while those of Guru Gobind Singh styled "the Singhs or lions" would lose it. That seemed an oversimplification of the situation in the Punjab. However, the conversion into Christianity of the deposed minor Maharaja Daleep Singh in 1853 sent shock waves to an already enfeebled community.

Lord Dalhousie who annexed Punjab, and had at one time opined about the extinction of Sikhism in a short time, assured its assertion of self-identity by making the observance of Khalsa tradition (long hair and beard with baptism) compulsory for every Sikh unit, and making attendance at Gurdwara compulsory. The British officers also stood solemnly and saluted when the holy Granth was ceremoniously taken past them.[6] That really reinforced the sense of allegiance to

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Sikhism. The English did so not as a matter of favour to Sikhism but in pursuance of their policy "to extend equal rights to all native religions and to align with none", or in other words, in pursuance of the policy of "religious impartiality." This made them to treat Sikhism as a religion distinct from Hinduism.[7] The *maryada* (rituals) followed in Sikh regiments -provided the correct definition of orthodox Sikhism, and served as a loadstar later to the Sikh revivalists.

The English right from the annexation of Punjab regarded the Sikh shrines as fulcrums of power and authority. They used Gurdwaras apart from Sikh aristocracy as channels of communication and individual control of the Sikhs. They continued their *dharmarths* (grants) and in some cases virtually controlled their administration. This legitimised the position of managers, leading families and other groups or organisations. The British followed the precedent of Ranjit Singh since 1815 in appointing a manager for the Golden Temple, Amritsar, to justify their appointing a manager of the shrine.[8]

The Government through Jodh Singh, Extra Assistant Commissioner, effectively maintained direct management of the temple. It, in the process controlled the *Pujaris, Ragis, Rababis,* and a miscellany of employees. This invited some criticism within a few years.

The British modified the arrangement in 1859 by drawing up a *dastur ul amal* (regulations of administration) which provided them a more informal and covert connection with the Golden Temple administration. It provided for appointment of a *Sarbrah,* or manager who was to be assisted by an advisory committee of nine baptised Sikhs.[9] There was a spirited but lone voice asking, "Khalsaji, can't we carry on the management of the Darbar Sahib without the help of the Sirkar (government)?" The temple functionaries themselves were major contributors for continued British involvement in the affairs of the shrine. The *dastur ul-amal,* however, had one progressive feature. It provided that "the sole proprietor of this sacred institution forever is the Guru Ramdas: no person else has any title to proprietorship. The claim to the novitiate, or *chelaship,* belongs to the whole 'Khalsa' body."[10] This paved the way for taking over of the shrine eventually by the Panth under its direct management.

Generally, the British confirmed the management of the existing *Pujaris/Mahants/others* who in course of time got the mutations of grants transferred to their names; they emerged as proprietors, thereby complicating the position at the time of Gurdwara reforms. The *dastur* for Darbar Sahib Amritsar, however, reiterated the correct position applicable to all the Sikh shrines appropriating sole proprietorship to the Gurus and *chelaship* or administration to the entire Sikh Panth or community.

Forces were already at work for rejuvenation of Sikhism. Mention must be made here of the Nirankari and Namdhari movements which started during the Sikh rule and persisted with social and religious reforms. The Nirankari Conference in Rawalpindi in March 1855 introduced *Anand* marriage according to the Sikh rites. Two years later, Baba Darbara Singh codified the Sikh ceremonies from birth to death." The Namdhari movement, however, got a spurt with Baba Ram Singh's succession in 1862 when the centre of the movement was shifted from Hazro to Bhaini Sahib, Ludhiana.

Baba Ram Singh launched a crusade for religious reform and revival. He exhorted his followers to be strict in following the Khalsa *rehat* (code of conduct). He administered *amrit* to both the sexes together, introduced a number of social reforms and set up an elaborate missionary work.

He believed that the *Adi Granth* is the real Guru, and condemned Sodhis, Bedis, Mahants, Brahmins as impostors.

Baba Ram Singh had seen how by deception the English had annexed the Punjab. He sought to consolidate the Sikh power for political ends. He was ahead of his times in advocating *Swadeshi,* and boycott of western goods and ideals.

The opening of Muslim butcher shops in the holy city of Amritsar selling kine flesh in early 1860s had caused deep resentment in the Sikh community both against butchers and the Christian overlords. In mid-1860s, some followers of Baba Ram Singh, under misdirected zeal for protection of cows under age old Brahminical precepts, were involved in the murder of Muslim butchers. This was taken as a challenge to the administration. Baba Ram Singh's socio-religious reform movement clearly had its concomitant political backlash.

Because of political overtones, and that too, so shortly after the 1857 revolt, the local authorities over-reacted. They at first interned him and later kept him under surveillance. Later in 1872, when some of his followers, against his express advice, attacked Malaud and Malerkotla, the Deputy Commissioner of Ludhiana, in disregard of the orders of his superiors, and without a fair trial, blew 49 of the arrested Namdharis by guns. Baba Ram Singh was deported to Rangoon, where he died in 1884.

This caused a setback to the Namdhari movement, which politically was an expression of pent up feelings against the English machinations in the annexation of the Punjab. Religiously, the Namdhari movement, even under Baba Ram Singh, had developed certain peculiarities, and despite his protestations in his letters from Rangoon jail that he was not a Guru, his over-enthusiastic followers raised him to that level.[12] Overall, the Namdhari movement under Baba Ram Singh was like a whirlwind which affected certain pockets only, and had limited impact on the general body of the Sikhs.

The Christian missionaries spread their network to Lahore, Amritsar and other parts of the Punjab after its annexation. They saw hopeful signs of conversion of the Sikhs and made them a special target. The conversion of Maharaja Daleep Singh in 1853 and the invitation extended to the missionaries by the Sikh Raja of Kapurthala in 1862, the first ever such invitation by an Indian ruler to the missionaries, gave them a promising start.

Not surprisingly, the census of 1855 in the Punjab enumerated the Sikhs as a sect of the Hindus. The rectification of the position in the 1871 census, which enumerated the Sikhs as a separate community, constituted a small but welcome step, though it did not mean much doctrinally. It, however, reflected the British appreciation of Sikhism in its proper perspective.

The revolt of 1857 by certain Sections of Bengal Army (with Bombay and Madras Armies keeping aloof), was a serious move to restore antiquated forces. If successful, it would have balkanised India and broken the Indian unity so assiduously brought about by the English. The general body of the Sikhs in Punjab dreamt of restoration of the Khalsa Commonwealth, but lack of leadership proved a decisive factor in thwarting a forceful move. The Sikh rulers in cis-Sutlej states (as also a large body of Indian rulers including Scindia, Nizam and a host of others) sided with the English and played a significant role in the fall of Delhi which broke the backbone of the revolt. In the post-1857 milieu, the Sikhs were right on the top, and gradually emerged as a major factor in the

Indian army. This made the British to renew their interest in an understanding of the new members of the Raj. The various research studies sponsored, as well as the reports of the Christian missionaries, helped to pinpoint the distinctive characters of the Khalsa. The Army Regulations laying emphasis on baptism for the Sikh soldiers greatly helped to buttress the position of Sikhism.

By 1870, a new educated class had arisen in the Punjab. This meant a readjustment in inter-communal relations between the major communities - Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs.

The Sikhs were still in a confused state, with divisions over the basic issue whether it was separate from Hinduism or a part of it. Some contended that Sikhism had been an attempt to rid Hinduism of idolatrous practices and restore it to its pristine purity. Another section claimed that Sikhism had come into being for the sole purpose of protection of cows and Brahmins, i.e. the Hindu society from Muslim oppression. Since the necessity no longer existed, there was no need for continuation of Sikhism.[13] There were others who emphasised the spiritual side of their faith, but contended that symbols and baptism instituted by Guru Gobind Singh were not essential to be a true and faithful Sikh.

Commissioned by India Office to undertake a translation of the Sikh scriptures, Dr. Ernest Trumpp, the German linguist, arrived in Lahore in 1870. He found that Sikhism was a house divided against itself. With contours of the religion still not clear and the fundamentals still being debated, he thought *Giants* and *Granthis* were not in a position to materially assist him in translation. His attempt to seek help from the Sikhs associated with the administration of the Golden Temple at Amritsar, came to naught as he alienated them by blowing cigar smoke across the pages of the holy Granth Sahib in their presence.

Because of his egotism as a missionary and rigorous training as a linguist, he thought he knew much more the meaning of the Sikh scripture than the people who revered it. For 18 months, he worked in association with the Hindu collaborators, who were dead set against Sikhism, and occasionally with the Oriental Society, the Anjuman-i-Punjab, and translated one-third of Adi Granth, which was later published in 1877.

Influenced by the Hindu collaborators, and his disdain for *Granthis* and *Gianis,* Dr. Trumpp made caustic and derogatory comments on the Sikhs. He worked on two assumptions. One, that the Sikhs were Hindus, and even if they were not, Sikhism was a dying religion, in the mortal grip of Hinduism, soon to be engulfed. He wrote, "Sikhism is a waning religion that will soon belong to history."[14] His first assumption influenced him in his second one, that *Adi Granth* had nothing of value as a religious work. He made only a literal translation and failed to see its underlying theology. In his linguistic egotism, he saw only its linguistic value.

In his introduction, Dr. Trumpp made provocative assessment that later stirred the Sikh revivalists. For instance, he rejected *Janam Sakhi* literature as mythology and argued that Guru Gobind Singh worshiped *Durga,* that the Guru accepted caste, and employed Brahmins in ceremonies. In short, Dr. Trumpp provided all the ammunition that was immediately used by Hindu and Arya Samaj literature on Sikhism for about three decades.[15]

In 1872, the publication of Trumpp's translation was five years away, but his activity had emboldened his Hindu collaborators to openly attack Sikhism and castigate the Sikh Gurus. It were partly these unbecoming attacks on Guru Nanak by Sharda Ram Phillauri in his lectures at Guru ka

Bagh in Amritsar, and partly the onslaught of Christian missionaries in securing converts from the Sikh youth, especially students from the Amritsar Mission School, that made some of the prominent Sikhs to convene a historic meeting at Guru ka Bagh, Amritsar, when it was decided to form a society under the name of Sri Guru Singh Sabha with Sardar Thakar Singh Sandhanwalia as President and Giani Gian Singh as Secretary. That marked the birth of the Singh Sabha movement. Other prominent persons who participated in the initial meeting were Kanwar Bikram Singh of Kapurthala, Baba Khem Singh Bedi, and Giani Sardul Singh from Amritsar. The inaugural meeting held on *Dussehra* (October 1, 1873) at Manji Sahib, Amritsar, and attended by *Pujaris,* Mahants, Gianis, Nirmalas and prominent Sikh Sardars, was significant. *Hukamnamahs* were obtained from the four *Takhts* and other historical Gurdwaras in support of the organisation and pointed to a wider ramification.[16]

The objectives of Singh Sabha, Amritsar, were to inculcate the principles of Sikh religion as preached by the Sikh Gurus among the Sikhs with a view to restoring Sikhism to its pristine purity, preach the principles of Sikh religion by word of mouth, by publication of historical and religious books, and through magazines and newspapers, encourage propagation of Punjabi, reclaim apostates and attract the sympathies of those highly placed in public administration to the educational progress of the Sikhs. The Singh Sabha was to shun politics.[17]

The Singh Sabha was essentially a revivalist movement though the authorities later used the words reformists, neo-Sikhs or Tat Khalsa interchangeably for the members of the Singh Sabhas. The word reformists or neo-Sikhs in the context of Singh Sabhas always meant revivalists as the Singh Sabhas only sought to revive the Sikhism of the Guru period, without making any deviations.

The Singh Sabha instantly caught the imagination of the literate sections of the community. The majority of its members, however, belonged to upper classes, and its three prominent founders had acute personal differences. Kanwar Bikram Singh was a pure reformer. Baba Khem Singh Bedi besides being dedicated to reform was anxious to get himself recognised and worshipped as a Guru. Sardar Thakar Singh Sandhanwalia dreamt of driving the English out and re-establish the Khalsa *Raj*.[18] The zeal of Amritsar Singh Sabha lasted about two years when it showed signs of being dormant.

The Singh Sabha became a movement with Bhai Gurmukh Singh, Professor of Mathematics and Punjabi, Oriental College, Lahore, as its moving spirit. He did yeoman's job in propagating Singh Sabha ideals and establishing Singh Sabha, Amritsar. Later in l879, he helped in forming Singh Sabha, Lahore, with Diwan Buta Singh as its President and himself as its Secretary. The Lahore Singh Sabha, as against that in Amritsar, was more democratic in character. It had members from all sections of the Sikh society. The Lt. Governor of Punjab, Sir Robert Egerton, agreed to become its patron and the Viceroy, Lord Lansdowne, lent his support to the Sabha. A Punjabi weekly, *Gurmukhi Akhbar*, to popularise the Sikh ideals was started. Prof. Gurmukh Singh had a clear perception of Sikhism as enunciated by the Sikh Gurus, and was determined to restore it to its original shape, without any compromise with Hinduism. A number of Singh Sabhas were established and affiliated to the Singh Sabha, Lahore.[19] His *amrit prachar* (administration of baptism) to all, including Muslims and lower classes, was an effective movement which, however, brought him in conflict with certain *Pujaris* of the Sikh shrines. Gradually, the Singh Sabhas constructed their own gurdwaras, with *granthis*, *ragis*, and *updeshaks*, and they became centres of new revivalism.

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The Lahore Singh Sabha under the leadership of Prof. Gurmukh Singh constituted the radical wing and represented the wave of the future. Prof. Gurmukh Singh was a clear-headed person. He would neither let unchallenged Baba Khem Singh Bedi's claim to be the Guru of the Sikhs or his claim to a seat with cushions in Darbar Sahib, Amritsar, nor did he have any sentiments for Sardar Thakar Singh Sandhanwalia's dreams for restoration of Sikh *Raj*. He had a clear perception that, in the present circumstances, seeking cooperation of the government was in the best interests of the Sikh community.

The warming up of the Singh Sabha activity was discernible by a decision to establish a Khalsa Diwan at Amritsar. This came into being in 1883 to oversee the functioning of over three dozen Singh Sabhas. There were, however, differences over the provisions of the constitution of the Khalsa Diwan. These resulted in a break, with the Lahore Singh Sabha spearheading a Khalsa Diwan at Lahore with a membership of all except three of the Singh Sabhas affiliated to it.[20] Suffice it to say that the Singh Sabha, Lahore, became the focal point of the Sikh reform movement.

Prof. Gurmukh Singh earned the hostility of the *Pujaris* of Amritsar by his writings in July and August 1886 against idol worship and other Brahminical practices at Golden Temple, Amritsar. The death in 1887 of Kanwar Bikaram Singh of Kapurthala who offered unswerving and unfailing support to Prof. Gurmukh Singh, made his opponents to gang up against him. Baba Khem Singh and his other Bedi, Bawa, Bhalla and Sodhi protege's, and *Pujaris* at various Sikhs shrines, conducted a persistent campaign against his opposition to "un-Sikh" practices in Sikh places of worship. They framed the following charges against him and his close associates: 1. That Professor Gurmukh Singh showed disrespect towards *Guru-Ansh* (descendents of the Gurus) - Bedis, Bhalls, Bawas and Sodhis; 2. That utter disrespect was exhibited towards the picture of 24 Avatars of the Hindu pantheonism by them in one of the Singh Sabha *diwans* in Lahore; 3. That the Lahore Singh Sabha assimilated a Muslim into the Sikh *sangat* (congregation) after *amrit* (baptism) administration; 4. That the low caste sweepers, cobblers, and Muslims were made to sip *amrit* (baptism) from the common *bata* (steel bowl); and, 5. That they did not bow before the *Guru Granth Sahib* when there was no *sewadar* or Granthi in attendance.[21]

All the above so-called sacrilegious indictments were deliberated upon by the opponents in meetings held in Faridkot and Amritsar and adopted in the form of resolutions. Above all, a *hukamnamah* was obtained from the Akal Takht, Amritsar, on March 18, 1887, ex-communicating him from the Panth.[22] In addition, similar *hukamnamahs* were got issued from Takht Kes Garh (Anandpur Sahib), Takht Patna Sahib (Bihar), Takht Dam Dama Sahib (Talwandi Saabo), and Takht Hazoor Sahib (Abchal Nagar, Nanded), in the name of Sikh *sangats*. Baba Khem Singh also sought to enlist support for himself and against Prof. Gurmukh Singh from other Singh Sabhas. These *hukamnamahs* were in contradiction to an earlier joint *hukamnamah* issued by the Akal Takht and Darbar Sahib in 1879 calling upon all the Sikhs to join the Singh Sabha movement which aimed to restore the original form of Sikhism.[23]

Professor Gurmukh Singh for whom Panthic service was dearer than his own life, kept his flag flying. Under his leadership, the Singh Sabha, Lahore, in the 1890s relentlessly pursued the objectives of defending the Sikh faith from hostile onslaughts; he propagated the faith in its unadulterated form by peripatetic *updeshaks*, and used his facile pen which led to a lot of publications; and by organising Singh Sabhas to have history committees to make the community conscious of its unadulterated and hoary past, without its layers of superstitions and misinterpretation.

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The last quarter of the 19th century in the Punjab was marked by a period of intense dynamism, of ideological and religious conflict amidst an increasing polemical atmosphere. Each group within a given religious community, Hindu, Sikh or Muslim, sought to project its own concepts and in the process struggled within its own community and beyond. The religious competitiveness between the two minority communities, Hindus and Sikhs in the Punjab, concerned itself more with their sense of identity than with the question of power and dominance. Attempts among the Punjabi Hindus to create a new, modernised and respectable religious tradition inevitably altered their existing relations with all other religious communities in the Punjab - Muslims, Sikhs and Christians - at a more fundamental level. The educated Punjabi Hindu who found himself in a vacuum at first turned to the Brahmo Samaj, and later to the more aggressive Arya Samaj.

Paradoxically, it were the Sikh reformers, including Kanwar Bikram Singh, who alongwith resident Bengalis and some Punjabi Hindus were instrumental in bringing Swami Dayanand to the Punjab and giving a fillip to the Arya Samaj movement. They looked askance both at the spread of cow slaughter and the activity of the Christian missionaries in the Punjab. Following the brutal suppression of Namdharis, there was a void and they looked for succour from without. Swami Dayanand, to begin with, had sought to bring all social reformers on one platform; and on the eve of the Delhi Darbar in 1877, he had convened a meeting at the place of his sojourn in Delhi, which was attended by Munshi Kanahaya Lal Alakhdhari, Babu Narain Chander Roy of Lahore Brahmo Samaj, Babu Keshab Chander Sen of Calcutta, Munshi Indramani of Moradabad, Sir Sayyad Ahmad Khan of Aligarh and Babu Harish Chander Chintamani of Bombay. Swami Dayanand refused to accept any doctrine which refused to accept the Vedas as revelation. This fundamentalism was not acceptable to many and so the effort had failed.

Swami Dayanand was now in a more receptive mood to listen to the Sikh and Punjabi Hindu reformers. They, to begin with, brought about a transformation, a *shuddhi* in his thought processes. Swami Dayanand as a result discarded in its entirety much of his interpretation of Vedas propounded in the *Satyarth Prakash* of 1875 edition.[24] For instance, during the Rig Vedic age, eating of the *bovine* flesh and offering of animals for religious sacrifices was a common practice. Following that, Swami Dayanand in the 1875 edition of *Satyarth Prakash* had advocated:

1. "Flesh should be used in performing *havan* morning and evening" (p. 45);
2. (Sanctioned) killing of animals (p. 171);
3. "It is lawful to kill a sterile cow and eat its flesh" (p. 302);
   and,
4. In the course of the refutation of the tenets of Jainism, considered it lawful to kill animals for the sake of their flesh (p. 399).

Swami Dayanand now agreed to reverse his earlier views about beef eating,[25] and in due course established Cow Protection Society. He also wrote a book on Cow Protection.

The principles of Arya Samaj laid down in 1875 were revised and relaid at Lahore in 1877 with the assistance of a committee of three - Lala Sain Das, Lala Jiwan Das and Lala Mul Raj -when the Arya Samaj was founded afresh, with Bhai Jawahar Singh, a leading Sikh revivalist as its Secretary.

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Swami Dayanand found ready acceptance among a section of Punjabi Hindus who had been so deculturised that they knew neither Sanskrit nor Hindi and could read their own scriptures only in Urdu translations. The membership of the Samaj consisted by and large of Hindu commercial classes - Khatris, Aroras and Banias - who virtually monopolised western education; it met three of their pressing needs, viz. an upward social mobility because of their improved economic status, defence of established values from onslaught of Islam and Christianity, and a palatable reformed Hinduism avowing monotheism "on the authority of Vedas".[26]

His vision of a Hinduism based on infallibility of Vedas, shorn of idolatry, polytheism, Brahminical domination and intricacies of the *Jati* (caste) system, possessing rationality and modern science found ready acceptance among the urban commercial sections of the Hindus.

The Arya Samaj identified itself with Sikhism as a movement which had sought to create a purified social structure devoid of idolatry, the caste system, and evils of priestly dominance.[27] "Aryas I would capture Sikh past and make it their own". Both worked for transformation of the contemporary society on identical lines. Both, had an identical programme - both were monotheists and denounced image/idol worship, social superiority of Brahmins, onslaught of I Islamic and Christian missions, caste inequality and *purdah;* and stood for widow remarriage and female education. They worked in close collaboration.[28]

The young educated Sikhs reacted to the Samaj with sympathy and a few with enthusiastic commitment. Bhai Jawahar Singh worked closely with Swami Dayanand and was a moving spirit of the Samaj. He served as Vice President of the Paropkarni Sabha, Secretary of the Lahore Arya Samaj right from its inception and was Secretary of the Dayanand Anglo-Vedic College fund collection committee. Bhai Jawahar Singh's leadership in the Samaj brought some other Sikhs to the movement, including Bhai Ditt Singh and Bhai Maiya Singh. Bhagat Lakshman Singh found himself on the same ideological wavelength and joined the Samaj. Through the early 1880s, young educated Sikhs worked in the Samaj with little noticeable strain.[29] Aryas and reformist Sikhs stressed similarities of 'true' Sikhism and Arya Hinduism.

For Swami Dayanand, Sikhism was one of the innumerable cults of Hinduism, to be noted, refuted and then forgotten.[30] His major targets for criticism were orthodox Hinduism, Islam and Christian missions. Sanatanist Hindus responded with equal vehemence. The Brahmo Samaj in the Punjab at first aligned with Swami Dayanand, but shortly distanced itself. In the ensuing controversies, Swamiji had little to say against the Sikhs. Only once in Amritsar, he chose to belittle their faith, its founders and the current Sikh practices. The Sikhs were outraged and the Nihangs threatened to kill him. Dayanand later recanted and withdrew his criticism of Guru Nanak whom he had earlier described as a man of little learning because of his lack of knowledge of the Vedas or Sanskrit.[31] In a letter to Bhagat Singh, Chief Engineer at Ajmer, he promised to delete the unsavoury references to Sikhism from the forthcoming edition of the *Satyarth Prakash.*[32]

Orthodox Sikhs saw that Swami Dayanand's belief in the infallibility of Vedas was as uncompromising as was that of the Muslims in the Qoran, and to him *Guru Granth Sahib* was of secondary importance. Nonetheless, some Sikh reformers continued to be zealous Arya Samaj workers.

Swami Dayanand had set the tone and his overzealous followers, with whom anti-Sikhism was an article of faith, followed suit. After his death in 1883, a thoroughly revised version of the

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Satyarth Prakash which again, like the principles of Arya Samaj, was the work of a committee in which Munshi Indramani of Moradabad played a prominent role, was published in 1884. It contained Swami Dayanand's earlier criticism of the Sikh faith despite his express commitment to delete it. His followers proved anti Sikh zealots, and overruled him. Arya Samajis now acquired the ingredients of a newly oriented framework of hatred of non-Aryas which in course of time became more scurrilous. The revised edition carried direct and vituperative attacks on all religions including the Sikh Gurus, scriptures and the Sikhs, wantonly wounding their susceptibilities. Thereafter, criticism of the Sikh faith and the current Sikh practices increased in Arya Samaj publications, which were sometime downright sacrilegious.[33]

This caused uneasiness among the Sikhs in the Arya Samaj fold. Their religious consciousness as to true Sikhism got further awakened. The missionary work of Prof. Gurmukh Singh was in conflict with the new fangled Arya aggressiveness. Incidentally, this sowed the seeds of Arya Samaj-Sikh tension which got a twist and became Hindu-Sikh tension after the Indian independence because power in the province fell in the hands of Arya Samajists who had a stranglehold over the Indian National Congress in the Punjab, and carried on their war on the Sikhs with renewed vigour from a vantage position.[34]

The last straw which caused a breakup came at the Lahore Arya Samaj anniversary celebrations on November 25, 1888, when Lala (Pandit because of his learning) Guru Datt Arora in a speech at the gathering sharply criticised Sikhism. Pertinently, he said that if Swami Dayanand called Guru Nanak a fraud, what did that matter? Swamiji had the sum of the Vedas in his hands! He continued that "Guru Gobind Singh was not even a hundredth part like our Maharishi Swami Dayanand Saraswati and it is difficult to say whether the Sikhs have any religion or not, but surely they have no knowledge of any kind."[35] Other Arya speakers, specifically Pandit Lekh Ram and Lala Murii Dhar rose to second Lala Guru Datt's acerbic comments and added their own words of sarcasm to the criticism of Sikh religion.

The reaction was immediate. Bhai Jawahar Singh, Bhai Ditt Singh Giani, and Bhai Maiya Singh immediately resigned from their Samaj membership and were welcomed with open arms by Prof. Gurmukh Singh into the Lahore Singh Sabha. This was not merely a loss of three persons for Arya Samaj. This switchover greatly strengthened the Lahore Singh Sabha. Each of them became a staunch defender of Sikhism. Two of them, Bhai Jawahar Singh and Giani Ditt Singh, became leading lights of the Sikh resurgence movement. Soon, the controversy moved to the press and led to a debate for over a decade marking, a low watermark in Arya-Sikh relations.

The 1890s was a period of religious controversy and discord in the Punjab, with various communities involved in a bitter debate within and without themselves. What worsened the position most was the debate that the Arya Samajists had with the Muslims, orthodox Hindus and the Sikhs, mostly outside Mochi Gate, Lahore, on a somewhat regular basis.

The Sikhs faced onslaught from various sides - from within, from Christian missionaries, from Ahmadiyas who contended that Guru Nanak was a Muslim, and from the Arya Samajists who contended that the Sikhs were a sect of Hinduism and not a separate religion. By the close of the century, the situation became so perverse that the Aryas contended that they were not Hindus but Aryas, and should be returned as such in the forthcoming census. At the same time, they wickedly asserted that the Sikhs were Hindus!

The Lahore Singh Sabha successfully met the challenge from within, by trying to erode the base of Baba Khem Singh Bedi, who, even in 1890s, persisted in his efforts to get recognised as the fifteenth Guru of the Sikhs. The Lahore Singh Sabha by maintaining a correct line, prevented any deviations. Prof. Gurmukh Singh was conscious of the laudable objectives of the earlier Nirankari and Namdhari movements and had seen how the two movements had deviated from the centre of Sikhism by reverting to the institution of the personal Guru. That was divisive and against the injunctions of Guru Gobind Singh who had abolished personal Guruship and had passed it on to the *Adi Granth*. The Lahore Singh Sabha and the branches affiliated to it gave a position of eminence to the *Adi Granth* (*Guru Granth Sahib*) as the successor of Guru Gobind Singh and the current Guru of the Sikhs and for all times to come, to the exclusion of other claimants whose claims were false.

Trumpp did an unforeseen but signal service to the Sikh community by providing an overview that stressed the inconsistencies within the current Sikh practises and its predominant Hindu character. His analysis was either seen as an evidence against Sikh attempts to assert a distinct identity, or as an attack that had to be confronted and proven wrong. Trumpp's approach came quite handy to the Hindu-Arya Samaj literature on Sikhism. This led to what is aptly called a period of '*khandan mandan*' i.e. attack and defence preaching. Sikh journalism right from its inception had served as a forum for discussion of religious values with writers regularly dilating on exposition of the *gurbani* (scriptures), Sikh history, lives of Gurus and the Sikh martyrs.

An intensification of the religious controversy caused intellectual turmoil. Prof. Gurmukh Singh and Bhai Kahan Singh of Nabha toured the Punjab and discovered the hitherto unknown traditional *Janam Sakhis*, biographies, of Guru Nanak for publication. Two societies, Gurmat Granth Pracharak Sabha of Amritsar and Gurmat Granth Sudharak Committee of Lahore, evaluated sources and sought to prevent the printing of unauthentic *Janam Sakhis*, and inferior editions of the *Adi Granth*.[36] In addition, works of individual Sikh historians and theologians like Giani Gian Singh's volumes on Sikh history, Bhai Kahan Singh's commentaries on Sikhism, glossaries, and a massive encyclopedia on Sikh religion and literature, and Giani Ditt Singh's voluminous literary outpourings on martyrs, history and scriptures added to the new consciousness. The second aspect of intellectual fermentation - the emergence of pamphlets and small tracts, polemical in character, as vehicles of attacking and defending/preaching - were expressive of the same concern. Nothing was sacred in the emotional tract war - scriptures, heroes or family life - and faltering fellow Sikhs were equal recipients. "Punjabi has a store (house) of insults and derogatory ferms, and probably these have never been put to more devastating use than when Sikh opponents locked horns."[37] The earnestness of the Lahore Khalsa Diwan and the pragmatic approach of Prof. Gurmukh Singh were instrumental in the foundation of the Khalsa College, Amritsar, in 1892, after more than a decade of tireless efforts.[38] The College Council was controlled by its Vice-President Sir Attar Singh Bhadaur with Jawahar Singh serving as General Secretary.[39]

Another upshot of the efforts of the Lahore Khalsa Diwan and Prof. Gurmukh Singh was their success in drafting a British Officer, Max Arthur Macauliffe, to resign his commission as District Judge and undertake the preparation of a translation of the *Adi Granth* in English.[40] Macauliffe had been caught up in the process of the vitality and self-examination of the Singh Sabha movement during 1882-1893.[41] He now relied on prominent Sikhs such as Bhai Sant Singh, Bhai Sardul Singh, Bhai Kahan Singh of Nabha and Giani Ditt Singh in providing him guidance in the interpretation. The completed sections were circulated among the Sikh scholars and vetted by a special committee formed for the purpose at Amritsar.[42]

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Mention may also be made of the laudable efforts made by Bhai Takht Singh in establishing Sikh Kanya Mahavidyalaya, a high school with a hostel for girls, at Ferozepur, during the period.

Giani Ditt Singh wrote scores of essays and was followed by Bhai Mohan Singh Vaid, Babu Teja Singh Overseer, and Bhai Vir Singh. The first three served as links in an informal communication chain binding the dispersed organisations. This culminated in the establishment of the Khalsa Tract Society with headquarters at Amritsar in 1894 under the auspices of Bhai Kaur Singh. It channelised the production and distribution of small, priceless, volumes on theology, religion, history, philosophy, social practises and topics of current interests, making pleas for vital and revived Sikhism. In the process, the Sikhs clarified, refined and delimited their own religious identity.[43] This was also to serve as a counter to the preaching of Christian missionaries whose success as shown in the 1891 census was quite noticeable. They, in 1893, had imported several *lakh* (hundred thousand) volumes of the Bible in Punjabi for propagation of the gospel. Thanks to Singh Sabhas, the Sikhs all over were catching up in education and were better placed in securing employment on the civil side under the government, apart from constituting by the end of the 19th century, the major component in the army.

Side by side, with the growing Sikh-Arya controversies and discord, a measure of limited cooperation in the realm of *shuddhi* (purification) continued. The Sikhs offered assistance to the Arya Samaj to stem the tide of Christian and Islamic conversions. In the early 1890s the Arya Samaj, the Singh Sabhas and the Shudhi Sabha (which represented both the Hindus and the Sikhs) sometimes in alliance, performed purification ceremonies. The Sikhs had an advantage in having a complete tradition with initiation ceremonies. In 1890s there were instances of Arya Samaj and Singh Sabhas cooperating with each other in reclaiming lost Hindus and Sikhs respectively.[44] These represented a tangled relationship between the two.

Developments within the Arya Samaj irretrievably affected the Sikh-Arya relations. Arya Samaj was divided into two factions: one with Lala (Pandit) Guru Datt and his close allies Lala Munshi Ram (later known as Swami Shraddhanand) and Pandit Lekh Ram (Mahatma Party) which articulated a militantly religious version of Arya Samaj, and the other with Lalas Hans Raj, Lal Chand, Lajpat Rai (College Party) who propounded a more moderate and rational wing of the Samaj. This division was formalised in 1893-94 with vegetarianism and meat-eating becoming the issue symbolising their other differences as well.

This had its impact on Arya-Sikh relations in the Shuddhi Sabha. Cooperation between the Sikhs and moderate Aryas, however, continued and the radical Sikhs now instituted a 'pork test' for converts from Islam.[45] This was galling to radical Aryas because of their rigid insistence on vegetarianism. This further contributed to communal discord in the Punjab. The Shuddhi Sabha and Singh Sabha Lahore cooperated in 1894-96. In August 1896 they were successful in the mass conversion of about 200 outcaste Sikhs according to the Sikh rites.[46]

The Shuddhi Sabha now aimed to reclaim the outcastes and stem the success of the Christian missionaries.

During the last decade of the 19th century, the question of Sikh identity was posed with greater frequency. The young educated Sikhs increasingly sought a place for themselves within a distinctly Sikh world. The aggressive Arya preachers continued to criticise the Sikh Gurus and *Adi*

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Granth. The moderate Aryas came to the defence of the embattled Sikhs. The *Arya Gazette* (July 15, 1897), their mouthpiece, for instance, wrote that Swami Dayanand had an imperfect knowledge of Gurmukhi and that the remarks made by him in the' *Satyarth Prakash* were based on second-hand information. This caused a furore among the radical wing of the Arya Samaj.[47] The question of Sikh identity and Arya-Sikh relations were now caught in inter-Arya conflict between the two sections over the question of infallibility of Swami Dayanand or otherwise.

For the next two years, the issue of identity of the Sikhs was debated with increasing frequency. Bhai Jagat Singh, a Sikh member of the Arya Samaj, contended that Sikhism was merely an earlier version of the Arya Samaj. Lala Thakar Das and Bawa Narain Singh supported his position in their brochures published in 1899, "*Sikh Hindu Main*" (Sikhs are Hindus). Bhai Kahan Singh of Nabha in his famous tract '*Hum Hindu Nahin*' (We are not j Hindus) also published in 1899 cogently analysed the distinctive characters of Hinduism and Sikhism, and laid the basis for the Sikh assertion to a separate identity and communal separateness.[48] This tract did much more than anything else to de-Hinduise the Sikhs, and '*Hum Hindu Nahin*' soon became the rallying cry for the Sikhs' assertion of their identity.

This debate continued with vigour and caused heightened group consciousness. The conversion of *Rahtia* Sikhs in June 1900 by the Arya Samaj and cutting off of their long hair publicly at Lahore,[49] caused an irretrievable schism between the Arya Samaj and the Sikhs on the one hand, and between revivalists or Tat Khalsa and the Gurdwara management on the other, as *Rahtias* were only asking for the right to equal treatment guaranteed to them at *pahul* (baptism) ceremony. During 1901-1903 the Sikhs debated with radical Aryas the meaning of Sikhism and their separateness from the Hindus. The alleged job discrimination by the government, because of economic competitiveness between educated Sikhs and Hindus, added fuel to the existing communal competition. It also led to language controversy, with Arya Samajists identifying themselves with Hindi in Devnagri script and the Sikhs with Punjabi in Gurmukhi script.[50] Other issues which agitated the revivalists were mismanagement of Gurdwaras, translating of Sikh precepts into practices in Sikh shrines, misuse of Gurdwara funds on the profligacy of Mahants and *Pujaris*, and the need for strengthening education among the community.

By the time, the Amritsar Singh Sabha under the leadership of Sunder Singh Majithia had reasserted its primacy. There was a steady weakening of the Lahore Singh Sabha largely due to the death of the people at the helm of its affairs.[51] This position was rather formalised at a special meeting of Amritsar Singh Sabha held in November 1901. It was attended by many influential Sikhs from all over the Punjab. This resulted, after due consultations with the Lahore Singh Sabha, in a larger meeting at Amritsar on October 30, 1902; a new organisation, the Chief Khalsa Diwan, came into being, with Bhai Sahib Bhai Arjan Singh, Chief of Bagarian, as President and Sunder Singh Majithia as Secretary.[52]

It aims and objects were as follows:

1. Uplift of the Sikhs in all spheres - political, social, moral and economic;
2. Propagation of the Guru's Divine World, carrying of his teachings to the farthest hamlet, and the spread of the fragrance of *nam* all around;
3. Removal of illiteracy and the spread of education among all, irrespective of caste and creed; and,

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4. Protection of the political rights of the Sikhs and the redressal of their grievances through constitutional means.

The *Khalsa Advocate*, started in 1903, carried the Diwan's message to the Sikh intelligentsia and masses. Bhai Vir Singh became the leading light in. the Sikh Tract Society and wrote a score of tracts in a lucid style. This gave birth to modern Punjabi prose. Bhai Mohan Singh Vaid and Babu Teja Singh Overseer, continued to render signal service to the community by their voluminous writings.

The reunification of two sections of the Arya Samaj by 1904 proved cataclysmic to the Sikh reformers. It energised them. Hitherto the moderate (College) section of the Arya Samaj had for long been closely aligned with Tat Khalsa; its knuckling under to the extremist section of the Arya Samaj brought an end to its limited cooperation with Tat Khalsa, also termed neo-Sikhs, in *Shuddhi* Sabha. It led to communal mobilisation on both the sides. The Sikhs now asserted that *Shuddhi* was essentially a Hindu concept. The holy *amrit* (baptism) ceremony of the Khalsa was all encompassing for entry of persons of any religion or creed to the fold of the Khalsa.[53] This severing of the last connection with a section of Arya Samaj egged the Sikh revivalists to look inwards, and concentrate more on setting their own house in order.

Sikhism from 1904-05, about a year before the partition of Bengal, reasserted its independent position. It began to consolidate and clarify numerous issues that had been agitating the community during the last 50 years. Paradoxically, the Tat Khalsa, right from this period of introspection and self-assertion, found themselves in conflict with the government. This was notwithstanding the efforts of the Chief Khalsa Diwan to charter a middle course and adopt a flexible approach.

The added Sikh sense of identity, combined with the strength the revivalists had gained, led them to purge their religion of idolatry.

In 1905, Arur Singh, manager of the Golden Temple ordered the removal of all Hindu idols from the precincts of the Golden Temple, thereby putting an end to the performance of Hindu rituals in that area. This meant the Sikh revivalists now breaking with the orthodox Hindus, after a bitter struggle with the reformist Hindus and Arya Samaj. The Hindus used to worship a Hindu deity, after a sacred bath at the Golden Temple tank, and the Brahmins used to officiate at these ceremonies. That put an end to their traditional privileges.[54] The Sikhs asserted monotheism of their religion wherein idols had no place.

The Sikhs received support from unexpected quarters. In a significant judgement in 1905, King Abdur Rahman of Afghanistan dismissed an appeal by Hindus for keeping idols in *dharmsala* (*Gurdwara*) *Hari Rai* in Kabul. He made a clear distinction between idol worshipper Hindus and the Sikhs - "followers of Baba Nanak who was one of greatest Unitarians and was opposed to idol worship." He went on to add that Hindus had no concern with Sikh shrines, as Sikhs had nothing to do with Hindi Thakurdwaras or Shivdwaras.[55]

Surprisingly, the removal of idols form the Golden Temple lee to a lot of infighting among the Sikhs themselves. Some of then accused the Tat Khalsa of weakening the community from within. Some *Pujaris* too were critical of the revivalists. Others unnecessarily blamed the British policy of 'divide and rule' succeeding in Golden Temple, Amritsar.

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By now, the revivalist Sikh newspapers such as the *Khalsa Advocate*, the *Khalsa Samachar*, the *Khalsa Sewak* and the *Punjab* were clamouring for taking over of the Gurdwaras by the community. They highlighted the licentious living, debauchery, rape and sacrilege apart from misappropriation of funds by *mahants* of several Gurdwaras, which were increasingly being misused and desecrated. It had its impact on the Chief Khalsa Diwan which, under pressure from Singh Sabha militants, adopted a resolution in 1906 seeking transfer of the management of the Golden Temple to representatives of the community. This was a direct challenge to the administrative control of the government formalised in 1859. The government chose to ignore the resolution. In May 1907, the *Punjab* urged formation of a "Gurdwara Sambhaal Committee" (Committee for the Control of Gurdwaras) having wider implications.[56]

The Sikhs by now opened up and went in for *Dharam Prachar*, propagation of faith, through *updeshaks*, *pracharaks*, *and kirtni jathas* in a big way within the Punjab and especially in Sind where they met a great success. This marked the period of self-assertion by the Sikh community. Mention may be made of Sant Attar Singh of Mastuana, Sant Sangat Singh of Kamalia and Bhai Hira Singh Ragi who, day in and day out, went in for *prachar*, disseminating of Gurus teachings by discourses and *kirtan*, devotional singing of Guru's hymns.[57] Singh Sabhas cropped up in various parts of the Punjab, establishing new gurdwaras and laying emphasis on the spread of education. Sunder Singh Majithia and Harbans Singh Attari started leading preaching *jathas* to Sind where they established a number of Singh Sabhas and spread the message of the Gurus. *Sukhmani*, the Psalm of Peace, was being recited in every Sind home.[58]

The setting up of Khalsa Bradari (Brotherhood) for levelling of class distinctions by the Sikhs from backward classes under the patronage of the Chief Khalsa Diwan in 1907 and the Sikh Missionary College at Tarn Taran in 1908 were reflective of the new consciousness. The Khalsa Handbill Society set up the same year would bring out, for free distribution, 20,000 copies of inexpensive literature to villagers, not covered by urban meetings and newspapers.[59]

The Sikh world was agog with the introduction of the Anand Marriage Bill in the Legislative Council in October 1908 by Tikka Ripudaman Singh of Nabha. This provided the first case of mass Sikh mobilisation. The community held over 300 public meetings and sent coordinated petitions carrying 700,000 signatures.[60] The Singh Sabhas had percolated to the village level and had become a mass movement. When the Arya Samaj sought to convert en masse the low caste Sikhs in Jalandhar in 1909, the revivalists outwitted them; they received them within the fold of Sikhism and ate food at their hands.

The *Pujaris* of the Golden Temple fell foul of the Anand Marriage Act; so also was the case with the efforts of Tat Khalsa in reclaiming backward classes into the Sikh fold and receive such Sikhs as their social equals and eating with them. The religious authorities of the Golden Temple and their cohorts controlling Dharamasalas and Gurdwaras all over the country came into collision with Tat Khalsa; they even began to refuse them admission or accept offerings from them. The *Pujaris* made a vigorous protest to the Deputy Commissioner at the proposed procession from Railway Station to the Golden Temple on the eve of the Sikh Educational Conference in 1910, as it was led by the same leaders who had eaten at the hands of converted Ramdasias and Rahtias.[61]

The Sikhs were as much influenced by goings on at the national level following the partition of Bengal in 1905, especially the *swadeshi* movement which found much wider acceptance in the

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north, south, east or west. Bhai Mohan Singh Vaid's diary of February 1906 makes a telling reading of the impact of the *swadeshi* movement in unifying all parts of India.[62]

The unrest in the Canal colonies symbolised by Sardar Ajit Singh's playing up Banke Behari's soul stirring song, "*Pagri Sambhal O Jatta*", (O Peasant, Guard Thy Honour) and unrest following the partition of Bengal affected the Sikh youth. This led the students of Khalsa College, Amritsar, to accord a most enthusiastic welcome in February 1907 to Gopal Krishan Gokhale, then regarded by the government as a most dangerous man. They, unhooked the horses of his carriage, yoked themselves instead, and pulled it to the College. They listened raptly to his lecture in the College Gurdwara wherefrom *Guru Granth Sahib* had been especially removed. From 1908, the Sikhs in Britain and North America flooded the Punjab with revolutionary literature and constituted a vocal element in the growth of Sikh national consciousness.[63]

The *Pujaris* of the Golden temple in this case also came on the wrong side of the community, and condemned the popular reaction in 1908.

The government overreacted. It took over the administration of the Khalsa College. This came as a rude shock to the Sikh community. Master Sunder Singh of Lyallpur wrote a brochure, *ki Khalsa College Sikhan da hai*, (Does Khalsa College belong to the Sikhs?). He accused the British of taking over the college surreptitiously the way they had taken over the Punjab, though they were the guardians of Maharaja Daleep Singh, and acted in breach of faith. A concomitant development which came as a redeemable feature was the foundation of the Sikh Educational Conference by the Chief Khalsa Diwan in 1908 to promote the development of education among the Sikhs. The Sikh Educational Conference did a lot for the growth of literacy in the community. It left behind a high school wherever its annual conference was held.

The Sikh political attitude was in the process of evolution following the Morley-Minto Council Reforms of 1909 and the grant of separate representation and weightage to the Muslims. The Sikhs asked for similar concessions. The Chief Khalsa Diwan's representative justified special representation for the Sikhs not on the basis of their population but their military contribution to the empire. Despite Lt. Governor's support to Diwan's claims, nothing came out of the move.[64]

By the end of the first decade of 20th century, the Sikhs were in high spirits and on the high road to emerge as a vital community. The publication in 1909 of Macauliffe's *The Sikh Religion* (in six volume), which received accolades in England and over time became a major work on Sikhism, was late by at least half a decade, if not more.[65] Macauliffe affirmed that Sikhism was a separate religion, but still in danger of reabsorption by Hinduism. He wrote, Hinduism had embraced Sikhism in its fold, "the still comparatively young religion is making a vigorous struggle, but its ultimate destruction is, it is apprehended, inevitable without state support." By this time, the Sikhs had outgrown the earlier phase of attempts to defend the intellectual tenets of their faith.

The assertion of Baba Gurbakhash Singh Bedi (son of Baba Khem Singh Bedi of Kallar, Rawalpindi) in his Presidential Address in 1910 of Punjab Hindu Conference at Multan that the Sikhs were Hindus was misplaced and received all round condemnation in strong language.[66] The census of 1911 justified the Sikh assertions and aspirations. The break with the Arya Samaj was complete. Only 63 persons claimed to be both Aryas and Sikhs.[67] The Sikh population rose from 2.1 million in 1901 to 2.88 million in 1911, recording a rise of 37.1 percent (as against an overall loss of 2.2 percent in population in the province because of the plague, etc.). This was reflective of

numerous Singh Sabhas reclaiming recalcitrant Sikhs within its fold. Another notable feature of the census was higher literacy among the Sikh males - of 9.4 percent as against 6.3 percent for all Punjabi males who could read and write.[68] Sikh students were increasingly entering the professions.

The secret memorandum prepared by D. Petrie, Assistant Director of Criminal Intelligence Department in August 1911 surveying "Recent Developments in Sikh Politics" during the last six decades, was an important document. It indicated his concern at the growth of the neo-Sikh movement which he regarded as "thoroughly disloyal".[69] The Director, Criminal Intelligence, C. R. Cleveland, toned down Petrie's observations in his comments of October 1911 that "Mr. Petrie has disclaimed infallibility and permanence of the conclusions which his labour has led him", and that "their modern developments are specially difficult to understand and appraise aright."[70] Unable to sort out various components in neo-Sikh aggressiveness, the authorities kept their fingers crossed.

The decision to acquire a portion of land of Gurdwara Rakab Ganj, Delhi, to plan a straight road for the proposed government house, following the transfer of capital to Delhi touched off a fierce agitation among the Sikh community in 1913 against the sacrilege.[71] The Chief Commissioner, Delhi, by the end of 1913 received telegrams from almost all Singh Sabhas in the Punjab. Harchand Singh of Lyallpur played a prominent role in the early stages of the Rakab Ganj Affair but was prevented from raising the issue at the Sikh Educational Conference at Jalandhar in April 1914.

The Chief Khalsa Diwan led by Sunder Singh Majithia under the influence of the Lt. Governor of Punjab sought to play a retrogressive role. One progressive feature of the goings on was the framing in mid-1914 of a Constitution of the Khalsa Gurdwara Committee which took over the administration of the Gurdwaras in Delhi. This incidentally marked the beginning of the Gurdwara Reform Movement. The breaking out of the First World War put the issue, including the building of the new capital, on the back burner.

The sacrilege of Gurdwara Rakab Ganj inspired a group of people, including Bhai Randhir Singh of Narangwal (who later founded Akhand Kirtni Jatha for propagation of the Sikh faith) to align himself with the returned emigrants to raise a revolt in the armed forces. Meanwhile, the Komagata Maru incident and the Budge Budge riots at the end-September had released fierce wave of indignation. The Chief Khalsa Diwan and others protested against the police firing and asked for a thorough enquiry. The onrush of emigrants, the Ghadr revolutionaries, in the following months to Punjab surcharged the atmosphere, though many of the returnees were interned in their villages. The revolutionary plan to effect a simultaneous rising by armed forces at Lahore, Ferozepur and Rawalpindi fell through because of a spy. Thereafter, the Ghadrite revolution degenerated into a campaign of terrorism and sporadic violence, culminatingly eventually in Babbar Akali movement. It caused ripples in the Sikh community.

The moratorium on agitation because of war did not impinge on Sikh concern over Gurdwara reform. A pamphlet in English printed at the cost of the Chief Khalsa Diwan advocated freedom of temples as the basis of all reforms. Already, as a result of exertions of the Ramgarhia Sabha, the Chief Khalsa Diwan and the Sikhs of Rawalpindi district, wearing of the sword was allowed in Punjab in June 1914. This was extended to cover other parts of British India in May 1917, and to Sikhs soldiers in 1920.

As a result of the new consciousness, the Sikhs got possession of a number of Gurdwaras. Mention may be made of Gurdwaras at Chittagong, Badel (Hoshiarpur District), Hafizabad,

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Gurdwara Bhai Taru Singh (Lahore), Campbellpur, Dhantaur (Abbotabad District) and Akali Phula Singh Samadh at Naushera (NWFP) which came under the management of the Sikhs as a result of civil suits or mahants willingly subjecting themselves to Sikh *sangats* (congregations). Civil suits were instituted over the mismanagement of Gurdwaras in Assam, Bengal, Bihar, U.P. apart from those in the Punjab - Kurukshetra, Thanesar, Sultanpur, Dalla, and malpractices at Patna Sahib and Panja Sahib which did not permit revivalists Sikhs to perform religious services.[72] The holy tank, *Santokhsar*, at Amritsar was cleaned by *kar sewa* (voluntary labour), making the resolution of the Municipal Committee Amritsar to fill it up redundant.

The announcement of the Secretary of State for India, Edward Montague, in the House of Commons in August 1917, of the policy of His Majesty's Government "of the increasing association of Indians in every branch of administration and the gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to the progressive realisation of responsible Government in India as an integral part of the British Empire", changed the ground situation, and led to renewed political activity.

Already in January 1917, Sunder Singh Majithia had, in a Memorandum, asked for separate representation for the Sikhs, not based on their numerical strength but "proportionate to the importance, position and services of the community". The Memorandum pointed out to the inadequate Sikh representation in the Reformed Council and pleaded for "one-third share in all seats and appointments in the Punjab." The Hindus in the Punjab opposed the Sikh contentions. Under the Lucknow pact between 'Hindu' Congress and Muslim League in 1916 they had conceded to Muslims 50 percent of representation in the Punjab, and knew that any weightage to the Sikhs would be at their cost. The Punjab Provincial Congress Committee dominated by Arya Samajist Hindus in November 1917 denied the very separateness of the Sikh's existence. It contended that "the Sikhs are a part of the larger Hindu community" and as such not entitled to separate electorate.[73] The Sikhs figured nowhere in the Congress-League scheme of 1916. Master Tara Singh in a letter published in the *Khalsa Akhbar* of November 9, 1917, warned the Sikhs of joint Hindu-Muslim 'conspiracy' to trample on the smaller nations.

There was Hind-Sikh tension and increasing moments of strife between the Tat Khalsa and the Arya Samajists. It renewed the determination of the revivalists to re-examine the question of Gurdwara management and control, as *Pujaris* at various Sikh Gurdwaras including the Golden Temple, Amritsar, were acting more as Hindu-Brahmins and serving as Trojan horses of Hinduism. The issue came to the fore at Gurdwara Babe di Ber, Sialkot, in 1918 when the revivalist Sikhs unsuccessfully asked for management by a representative committee of local Sikhs; they instituted a civil suit against the appointment of the new mahant, a minor grandson of the old Mahant, who was placed under guardianship of a *patit* (apostate) Sikh Honorary Magistrate.

Meanwhile, the Sikh revivalists won a significant political victory when the Motague-Chelmsford Report on Indian Constitutional Reforms published in July 1918 accepted in principle the Sikh demand for separate representation, in the process giving an effective recognition to their independent political entity. The Sikhs universally welcomed the new dole of reforms towards self-government.

Two issues now cropped up: the quantum of Sikh representation in the reformed Council, and the definition as to who was a Sikh. The recommendations in February 1919 of the Southborough Committee which had been appointed to work out details came out as a great

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disappointment on both counts. It recommended to the Sikhs, 15 percent of the elected seats, and wanted the electoral officer to "accept the declaration of an elector that he is a Sikh, unless he is satisfied that the declaration is not made in good faith" - making *Keshadharis*, *Sehajdharis*, Nirmalas, Udasis and others to be eligible for enrolment in special Sikh constituencies.[74] These defeated the very purport of separate electorate, to the great chagrin of the Tat Khalsa.

The Sikhs felt betrayed. The stirrings in the community led to a meeting of Sikh intelligentsia at Lahore on March 30, 1919. Sardar Gajjan Singh, a prominent leader of Ludhiana, and one of the two Sikh representatives in the Punjab Legislative Council, presided. It was decided to establish the Central Sikh League as a purely political organisation.

Shortly afterwards, the situation in the Punjab exploded because of the agitation against Rowlatt Bills, and the call for *Satyagraha* by Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. It led to perpetration of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre on Baisakhi, April 13, 1919, when troops under Gen. Dyer opened fire killing 379 and wounding over 2,000 unarmed persons. Then followed brutal repression. The wind of change did not affect the Chief Khalsa Diwan and the traditional Sikh leaders. Arur Singh, Sarbrah, and the head priests of the Golden Temple, Amritsar, not only conferred *saropa* (robe of honour) on General Dyer but also initiated him and Capt. Briggs into the brotherhood of the Khalsa, investing them with the five k's, the sacred emblem of brotherhood by letting them off from keeping *keshas*, long hair, and giving up smoking.[75] This was outrageous.

The Sikhs of all shades were by now disenchanted with the government. The Tat Khalsa was bitter and started articulating Sikh grievances with a greater degree of vehemence. Various issues got enmeshed to pave the way for militancy. Fundamental issues came up with fierceness and challenged the values nurtured by the revivalists for the last half a century.

To begin with, there was the very question of Sikh identity, and the jurisdiction of the government to define who was a Sikh. This was complicated by government interference in religious affairs of the Sikhs; the continued management of the Golden Temple under official patronage; the glaring defiance of Temple management in according differential treatment to low caste Sikhs causing obstruction to revivalist groups; the judgement in June 1919 confirming the appointment of an apostate Sikh as manager of Gurdwara Babe di Ber, Sialkot, bringing to the fore the inadequacy of law; and of the British Courts serving as vehicles of imposition of status quo to the indignation of the Tat Khalsa. Then were the questions of continued management of Khalsa College, Amritsar, by the British, and the redressal of the wrong done to Gurdwara Rakab Ganj in pulling down its outer walls. Though the Punjab government had exempted *Kirpan* from within the purview of the Arms Act in 1914, it now sought to reverse the decision by putting a limit on its length.[76] The Sikh newspapers, the Singh Sabhas and other organisations continued dissemination of brochures, pamphlets and handouts, and agitate the various issues with a greater degree of acrimony, raising the tempo of new consciousness.

The holding of the inaugural session of the Central Sikh League in Amritsar in end - December 1919 to coincide with the annual sessions of the Indian National Congrees and the Muslim League at the same place, was significant. The Central Sikh League, like the Congress and the Muslim League was an elitist organisation M. K. Gandhi and Madan Mohan Malaviya attended the inaugural session of the Sikh League.

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Politically, the Sikh League adopted a cautions attitude. It was forthright in expressing its disappointment at the inadequacy o Sikh representation in Central and Provincial legislatures. It referred to the long standing demand of the Sikh community for management of the Golden Temple by a representative body of Sikhs responsible to the Panth, and demanded that "the management and control o Sikh Temples and endowments should no longer be withheld from the community."[77]

The setting up of District Sikh Leagues in the first half of 1920 provided new forum to educated Sikhs to air their grievances against the government. At the Sikh League meetings, references were always made in the context of the sufferings of the Sikhs, am their sacrifices in the context of inadequate returns. It was this consciousness that "bred militancy and saw the emergence of Khalsa nationalism", which "was vividly expressed in revival of the Akali cult."[78]

In the summer of 1920, Akalis - people with god's name in their hearts, wearing black or deep blue turbans and large *kirpans* - started appearing in public meetings. This proved contagious and affected Sikh soldiers too. The government's decision to invite Arur Singh, Sarbrah of the Golden Temple, and Gurbaksh Singh Bedi as representatives of the Sikh community, to tender evidence before the Reforms Advisory Committee, and their endorsement of the Southborough Committee recommendations to accept" everyone as Sikh who claimed himself to be so, caused furore among the Tat Khalsa. It invited widespread condemnation throughout the province. Resolutions were adopted insisting that only *keshadhari* Sikhs could justifiably be considered Sikhs.[79] Arur Singh came in for special condemnation for pretending to be a religious guide too.

In desperation, a Sikh deputation left for London in July 1920 and put forth its case to the Secretary of State but to no effect. The Joint Parliamentary Committee, on its own, increased Sikh representation by two seats, raising the Sikh representation in the Punjab Council to 18.75 per cent. The Tat Khalsa felt bitter at the inadequacy of the Sikh representation, attributed it to the government mischief, and decided to boycott the 1921 elections. *Sehajdhari* Sikhs who had the option to be registered in either Hindu or Sikh constituencies, solved the problem for the Tat Khalsa by registering themselves as the Hindus.

In view of the Sikh militancy, the government issued a communique on July 14, 1920, expressing its intentions to withdraw from the management of the Golden Temple and make alternative arrangements in consultation with Sikh members of the reformed Legislative Council, to put off the matter by a year. The government's procrastination provoked the revivalists to step up their campaign for immediate resignation of Arur Singh, the government appointed Sarbrah. They threatened to take his effigy in a mock funeral, if he did not resign. Demoralised at governments' asking him to proceed on two months leave, Arur Singh appeared before the revivalists at their Jallianwala Bagh *Diwan* with folded hands. He asked for forgiveness and announced his resignation. This went home to the authorities who regarded it as a "decided victory for the party of reformers."[80]

The Tat Khalsa militancy, now that the question of reforms was out of the way, took a revolutionary turn. Khalsa nationalism was on the march. Events followed in quick succession to make the reform movement a torrent. The first question to be resolved related to the reconstruction of the outer walls of Gurdwara Rakab Ganj, Delhi. The government permitted the reconstruction of walls at the intercession of Maharaja Ripudaman Singh of Nabha in October 1920. The move earlier in July by Kartar Singh Jhabbar to raise a *Shahidi Jatha* (martyrs squad) to

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reconstruct the walls became superfluous as government relented and conceded the point in September. The *Shahidi Jatha* incidentally laid the foundation of first Of the several Akali Jathas that came into being shortly.

Gurdwara Babe di Ber was the first to be liberated after Khalsa Sewak Jatha of local Sikhs, despite hurdles, started performing daily services at the Gurdwara and restarted *Guru ka Langar*. On October 5, 1920, the Tat Khalsa elected a permanent committee of 13, to manage the Gurdwara.

Matters regarding the administration of the Golden Temple came to ahead in a dramatic manner. On October 12, 1920, the newly baptised low caste Sikhs at the annual session of Khalsa Bradri were taken to the Golden Temple accompanied by revivalists. The priests refused to accept *karah prasad*, sacramental food, from them, or offer prayers for them. The revivalists insisted on the right of every Sikh to do that. After theological discussion, the *Guru Granth Sahib* was consulted. The *Granthi* amongst the objectors, to his consternation, read out third Sikh Guru, Amar Das's hymn, "Brother, He showers grace even on those who have no merit and takes from them true Guru's service. By touch of Philospher's stone, i.e. the Guru, base metal has become gold. . . Our light has blended with His light, and we have become one with Him."

The priests, as also others, visibly affected offered prayers and accepted *prasad* from the hands of the newly converted Sikhs. When the whole party went to Akal Takht, the priests there fled. They did not return even when called by Sunder Singh Ramgarhia, the new Sarbrah. They were accused of sacrilege. The following day, the Deputy Commissioner constituted a provisional committee of nine, all reformers, including Prof. Teja Singh, Bawa Harkishan Singh, Teja Singh Bhuchar, Kartar Singh Jhabbar and others with Sunder Singh Ramgarhia, as its head to manage the two shrines.[81]

Gajjan Singh who had come in for severe criticism for associating with collection of funds for the outgoing Lt. Governor, Michael O'Dwyer, was ousted from Presidentship of the Central Sikh League in October 1920 session in Lahore. He was replaced by Kharak Singh, a lawyer from Sialkot, and intimately connected with the Tat Khalsa movement. The Central Sikh League now at Gandhi's instance opted for a programme of non-violent non-cooperation with the government on lines similar to those adopted earlier by the Congress. By the time, non-cooperation in the field of education had spent itself.

The impact of Gandhi on Sikh militancy aroused the faculty members of Khalsa College, Amritsar. They wanted to save the institution from the brunt of non-cooperation. At the same time they wanted to wrest control of the management from the government. They gave an ultimatum to the government asking it to withdraw its control over the management of the College by November 5, 1920, or failing that they would resign. During the period, the faculty members kept a low profile and did not permit outsiders to come into the institution, much less address the students. After much haggling, the government yielded, giving place to moderate Sikhs - Sunder Singh Majithia who became President, Harbans Singh Attari who took over as Secretary, Bhai Jodh Singh and others.[82] The new management was unhampered by any differences with the Akalis. The premier Sikh institution was saved from the baneful impact of Gandhian non-cooperation which would have led to its disaffiliation from the Punjab University. The end result was the upshot of an admixture of caution with valour.

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A *hukamnamah* was issued from the Akal Takht for convening a general body meeting of the Sikhs on November 15, to elect a representative committee of Panth to control the Golden Temple, Amritsar, and all other Gurdwaras. Two days before, the Punjab government, in consultation with Maharaja Bhupinder Singh of Patiala, constituted a committee of 36 - all reformers - with power to co-opt others, to manage the Golden Temple and other Gurdwaras like that of Tarn Taran affiliated to it. The gathering at Akal Takht, after two days deliberations constituted a committee of 175 members, including the 36 named by the government, to manage all Gurdwaras in Punjab and other parts of India. The representation was according to districts in Punjab and according to provinces outside. Members were also elected to represent Sikh states and Sikh bodies in Burma, Malaya, China and America.[83]

The inaugural meeting was held on December 12, 1920, at the Akal Takht when the Committee named itself, Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC). It constituted the highest consummation of the spirit of democracy among the Sikhs. Moderate Chief Khalsa Diwan leaders held leading positions -Sunder Singh Majithia as President and Harbans Singh Attari as Vice-President, with Sunder Singh Ramgarhia (government appointed Sarbrah) as Secretary. The Punjab government heaved a sigh of relief. Noting that it had proceeded on 'constitutional lines', it did not interfere in its proceedings.

The SGPC constituted the Shiromani Akali Dal which formally came into being in January 1921 to serve as a central body controlling and directing various Akali Jathas that had mushroomed from mid-1920. The purport of the SGPC and the Akali Dal was to conduct a purely religious reform movement to bring all Sikh shrines under the control of the SGPC and purge them of non-Sikh practices. The flurry of activity led to the Akalis arriving in gurdwaras to be liberated in strength, and setting up local committees of the Tat Khalsa after making provision for the existing Mahant if he cooperated or ejecting him if he did not. Already, on the death of the existing Mahant, Gurdwara Punja Sahib had come under the control of Tat Khalsa on November 18, 1920.[84]

The Punjab government, anxious not to provoke conflict with the reformers, or do anything to drive them into the lap of Gandhiites, adopted a policy of neutrality or non-interference. It told the Mahants and *Pujaris* that the government had no role to play. They could resort to civil courts or seek police protection on payment of expenses.[85] The government also announced its intention to initiate a committee to look into gurdwara reforms and enact suitable legislation.

The misdemeanour and depravity of Mahant Narain Das of Gurdwara *Janam Asthan*, (the birth place of Guru Nanak) at Nankana Sahib was well known and now invited attention of the Panth. He had a reputation of immorality and lewdness, and was condemned by the local congregation for scandalous behaviour, sacrilege and misuse of gurdwara funds. The SGPC on January 24, decided to hold a meeting of the whole Panth at Gurdwara *Janam Asthan* from March 4 to 6, 1921, to call on the Mahant to reform himself.

The reformers had a bath in blood, the following day, when a group of them went to Gurdwara Tarn Taran to amicably persuade the pujaris to reform themselves. The *Pujaris* at first got into negotiations and drafted mutually acceptable terms. Then, late in the evening, after getting drunk and with the assistance of hired men, they brutally attacked a group of reformers injuring seventeen of them; one of them died the next day. The authorities found the *Pujaris* to be in the wrong. The *Pujaris* confessed their crime, tendered a written apology and placed themselves at the mercy of the Panth.

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Mahant Narain Das of Gurdwara *Janam Asthan*, seeing the writing on the walls, at first entered into negotiations with the Tat Khalsa who were agreeable to meet his demands. Then, he changed his mind. He played a leading role in the convention of Mahants and *Pujaris* at Lahore around February 19, 1921, when they expressed themselves against Singh Sabha reformers and called on the government to restore the status quo ante at the Golden Temple, Amritsar. Meanwhile, he hired 28 Pathans and goondas from Majha, collected arms and ammunition besides other weapons, which caused a scare in the surrounding areas. The main *diwan* was still two weeks away. He, however, attacked an unscheduled *jatha* of 150 reformers led by Bhai Lakshman Singh visiting the shrine for religious services on February 20, 1921, killing brutally most of them. They were fired upon without warning and hounded from room to room. At least, one of them was tied to a tree and burnt alive.

When a massacre inside the shrine was on, a group of Sikh devotees arrived outside. Mahant Narain Das on horseback ordered killing of each and every long haired Sikh, and his men pursued some of them in the fields upto the railway station, killing and burning most of them. He also tried to burn down the dead bodies in a group in the shrine. Those killed outside were thrown into kilns and burnt alive. The *Guru Granth Sahib* was riddled with bullets. A few managed to escape including a boy of 12 who took refuge under the cot of the *Guru Granth Sahib*.[86]

Informed by a local Sikh official, the Deputy Commissioner, who was camping 12 miles away arrived by noon. He asked for troops which arrived late in the evening. Narain Dass and 26 Pathans were arrested. The Gurdwara *Janam Asthan* was placed under military guard. The government first gave the figures of dead as 20, then raised it to 67 and finally to 130 - the number of skulls counted in the shrine. Actual figure could be another 20 or so.

The news of the Nankana massacre spread like wild fire and within hour? Sikhs from all parts, deeply stirred by this carnage, marched on to Nankana Sahib. They reached the place despite hurdles by the authorities in blocking the roads, re-routing the trains and deployment of troops to cordon off the area. By the afternoon of February 21, 1921, 1000 Akalis and some members of the SGPC confronted the Deputy Commissioner, and were "resolved to advance on the Gurdwara or be shot" by troops. The government relented and handed over the management of the shrine to a Committee of seven headed by Harbans Singh of Attari. He took over in the name of the SGPC. The troops and the police were withdrawn.[87]

The Nankana massacre caused a wave of indignation among the Sikhs. There was widespread belief of the government complicity, if not encouragement to the Mahant. The expression of unequivocal abhorrence by the Punjab Governor, Sir Edward Maclagan, and the institution of an 'impartial' enquiry did not lessen suspicions against the government. The appointment of Sardar Mehtab Singh, Public Prosecutor, to conduct a preliminary enquiry showed the government's earnestness to allay Sikh suspicions and avoid direct conflict with them. But the elevation of C.M. King, Commissioner Lahore Division, who was considered by the Sikhs an arch villain, to the post of Asstt. Chief Secretary, Punjab Government, complicated the matters.

A number of prominent leaders of the Congress and the Khilafat /visited Nankana Sahib to exploit the prevalent Sikh resentment against the government and give it a direction. Their intentions were not clean.

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For M.K. Gandhi, the visit on March 3, was quite instructive. He had already taken politics into religion by supporting the Muslims on the Khilafat wrongs, and rationalised the move for the Hindus as a device to save the cow; and also told them that his overall objective was to establish *Ram Rajya*. He now sought to do the same with the Gurdwara Reform Movement, and the British were not unaware of the possible mischief he might play.

To his dismay and amazement, Gandhi now learnt that the Sikhs did not consider themselves to be Hindus, which he had perceived them to be. Precisely, for his Gujarati audience, he wrote in the *Navjivan* of March 13, 1921," Till today, I had thought of them as a sect of Hinduism. But their leaders think that theirs is a distinct religion." Though, Gandhi was told that his reference to them as Hindus was insulting to the Tat Khalsa, he was not reconciled to that till his very last. Here was Gandhi, a bar-at-law, in his earlier 50s, a widely travelled man in the midst of his political career, who had not heard of a Sikh, much less Guru Nanak or his mission! He could still learn if he had an open mind. Gandhi went on to add, "Their sacred book is the word of their *gurus* and, apart from that book, they accept no other scriptures as holy".

Gandhi developed mental reservations about the non-violent nature of the Gurdwara reform movement and further went on, "In addition to five symbolic articles mentioned above (the five Ks), the Akalis wear a black turban and a black band on one shoulder and also carry a big staff with a small axe at the top. Some of them have staff without an axe.[88] Fifty or a hundred men of such groups go and take possession of *gurdwara;* they suffer violence themselves but do not use any. Nevertheless, a crowd of fifty or more men approaching a place in the way described *is certainly a show of force* and naturally the keeper of the Gurdwara would be intimidated by it."[89] Gandhi could have surmised that what Akalis were practicing was the non-violence of the strong and not of the weak or coward, which he did not.

Speaking at Shahidi Diwan on March 3, 1921, and in his message to the Sikhs of Lahore the following day, Gandhi sought to integrate the Gurdwara reform movement into the national movement against colonialism. He wanted them "to dedicate this martyrdom to *Bharat Mata* and believe that the Khalsa can remain free only in a free India." He warned them of government's designs to win them over. To exasperate the Sikh feelings, he said, "Everything I saw and heard points to a second edition of Dyerism more barbarous, more calculated and more fiendish than Dyerism at Jallianwala." He wanted the Sikhs not to seek punishment of perpetrators of the crime, and boycott the British Courts. He lectured them that taking a large party to take possession of a Gurdwara constituted a show of force and offered them a gratuitous advice to go in for arbitration boards for settlement of possession of Gurdwaras or postpone the question till the attainment of *Swarajya*. To asphyxiate the Sikh assertion of their identity perhaps for ever, he finally wanted them to suspend the Gurdwara reform movement.[90]

Gandhi, in short, in his inimitable style took politics into religion which the Central Sikh League, a political organisation, by leaving the reform movement to the SGPC and the Akali Dal had scrupulously avoided. Gandhi had already become a "Hindu holy man with political cloak" in "quest for power".[91]

The Sikhs were not immediately taken in, but the damage had been done. Gandhi had sown the seeds of division in the Tat Khalsa which sprouted in a few months.

Sardul Singh Caveeshar, theorising for the Akalis, wrote, "The Sikh knows that if his religion is safe, he can certainly regain the lost liberty of his country; but if his religion is not safe, even if his country be free, there is no guarantee that he shall be able to maintain that freedom. In fact it is the freedom of his religion that is the best safeguard for the freedom of his country."[92]

The Sikhs demanded institution of two cases: one against the Mahant and his henchmen, and the second against the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner, Lahore, for their connivance. Despite their misgivings about official attitude especially since D. Petrie's taking over the investigations, they pursued relentlessly the case against the Mahant and others. It culminated in the Sessions Court Judgement on October 12, 1921, sentencing the Mahant and seven others to death, 8 to transportation for life, 16 Pathans to 7 years rigorous imprisonment, and acquitting the remaining sixteen. The High Court, however, on March 3, 1922 influenced by specious arguments advanced by Mr. Hassan Imam of Patna reduced the sentence of the Mahant to transportation for life, confirmed death sentence only on three, transportation for life against two and acquitted all others including the Pathans.[93] The decision came as an anti-climax. The authorities admitted the difficulty they were facing in explaining it to the Sikh soldiers who showed great resentment at the final denouement.

The Nankana massacre gave a great fillip to the Gurdwara reform movement. Kartar Singh of Jhabbar and Teja Singh of Chuharkhana played a prominent role. During the next fortnight or so, the Akalis reformed about two dozen gurdwaras mostly in the central Panjab, with Mahants in most cases voluntarily placing the shrines in the control of the SGPC and accepting the liberal terms offered.[94] There were a number of reverses when the authorities activated themselves and Akali volunteers were sentenced to imprisonment.

With the taking over as Officiating Chief Secretary by Mr. C. M. King there was perceptible hardening in the attitude of the administration towards the Akali movement. The post-Nankana tragedy period saw mass-scale arrest of Akali workers under Seditious Meetings Act, Arms Act and other provisions as if a reign of repression was let loose on them. Some of the Akali volunteers were even charged with dacoity, old cases were dug up against the revivalist Sikhs, and a large number of them were convicted.

In such an atmosphere, efforts of the government to effect legislation for better management of the Gurdwaras were half hearted and ill conceived. Such was the case with Education Minister, Mian Fazle Hussain's Resolution in Punjab Council in mid-March recommending to the Governor General to promulgate an Ordinance pending enactment of legislation. He conceded that the existing law was ill equipped and outdated to meet the current situation that had arisen. Some Hindu members, including Ganpat Rai, who was legal adviser of Mahant Narain Das, and declared himself to be *Sehajdhari* Sikh, wanted representation of Hindus and Muslims too in management of Sikh shrines! Raja Narendra Nath, President of Hindu Sabha and some other Hindu members spoke of various sects in Sikhism - Tat Khalsa, Sehajdharis, Sanatani Hindu-Sikhs, Nirmalas and Udasis - and wanted representation for each of these groups.

The Tat Khalsa denied existence of any sects. They wanted to manage their shrines in accordance with the teachings of the Sikh Gurus. They had doubts about the utility of an Ordinance. The proposal was dropped. But it led to formulation of the Sikh Gurdwaras and Shrines Bill, 1921. The Bill as it emerged from the Select Committee on April 8, 1921, provided for a Board of Commissioners to administer Sikh gurdwaras and shrines which were defined as Sikh

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places of public worship. The Board was to consist of a non-Sikh President, a Sikh member nominated by the government and two Sikh members out of a panel of 8 proposed by a majority of Sikh members of Legislative Council. The President had casting vote in case of a tie. This meant that the government had full control through the Board Chairman and the nominated member. Moreover, who was a Sikh was not defined.

The publication of the Bill invited sharp reaction all around. The reaction of ascetic orders of Nirmalas, Udasis, besides Sehajdharis and Hindus was critical and vociferous against denying them any representation. The reaction of Tat Khalsa was bitter, as it meant government control not only of the Golden Temple as hitherto, but all the Sikh shrines.

The debate in the Provincial Legislative Council reflected the corresponding divisions between the Tat Khalsa and others - Hindus of all hues. Raja Narendra Nath stated that the Bill lent state support to religious reform and contravened the British policy. He also asked for representation in the Board for each sects within the Sikh faith. Mehtab Singh asserted that since Nirmalas, Udasis, Sehajdharis by their own admission were Hindus, the Sikhs were "not prepared to permit their interference in our religious affairs and wounding our sensibilities."[95] The Gurdwaras belonged to the Panth, and no other person could have a say in their administration.

Because of lack of agreement, the Gurdwara Bill was postponed. There were mischievous attempts to set the Hindus against the Sikhs. But the Shankaracharya of Sharda Peeth and Lala Lajpat Rai came forward to sympathise with the Gurdwara reform movement and stemmed the anti-Sikh tide.[96]

The conference convened to sort out differences between Mahants, aided by Ganpat Rai and Raja Narendra Nath, and representatives of the SGPC on April 23, 1921, over Gurdwara legislation got bogged down. The Mahants insisted on following rituals inconsistent with the teachings of *Guru Granth Sahib*. They also demanded that the President of the Board should be a European and not a Sikh. The Press Communique of April 30, announcing failure of negotiations, exasperated the Sikh feelings further.

The SGPC met at Akal Takht on May 10-11, 1921, when the General Committee, with an attendance of only 40 members, decided to adopt passive resistance in respect of Gurdwaras already under its control, and non-cooperation by boycotting intoxicating liquors, fostering *swadeshi*, and organising and availing of *Panchayats*. Master Tara Singh, Secretary, SGPC, ordered, in the name of Akal Takht, the change of Guru Granth Sahib's *rumalas* into *swadeshi* ones, and also prohibited the use of foreign sugar for *karah prasad*.[97] "The resolution on non-cooperation was purely constructive and did not suggest any boycott of courts, schools or titles," as was the case with Gandhian non-cooperation movement in vogue.[98]

Gandhian politics-in-religion undermined the SGPC, and led to the first divisions and dissensions in the Tat Khalsa. Harbans Singh of Attari, Vice-President, resigned from his office and membership of the Working Committee, while Prof. Jodh Singh was induced to withdraw his resignation with some difficulty. To both of them, the adoption of non-cooperation meant entering the political avenue and was not within the scope of the SGPC charter. The adoption of non-cooperation was otherwise premature and unnecessarily caused loss of direction, especially when the mandate of the SGPC was expiring in another couple of months.

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Efforts were now concentrated on organising Akali Jathas, strengthening further the base at the grass root level and organising fresh elections to the SGPC. These were completed by August 1921. The composition of the SGPC was by and large the same, but the new executive committee reflected the image of Central Sikh League.

Taking over of Presidentship of the SGPC by Kharak Singh who was also President of the Central Sikh League unnecessarily tended to give a similarity in management of the two bodies, which even the governmental authorities conceded had differences in outlook." Mehtab Singh took over as Secretary. Sunder Singh Ramgarhia was the new Vice-president and was replaced later by Capt. Ram Singh.

The SGPC in end-August 1921 confirmed the resolution on passive resistance adopted in May last. It now proceeded to organise Shiromani Akali Dal at the base level with the active participation of people of all levels going down to inert masses at village level all over the Punjab. A survey carried out by the Criminal Investigations Department from November 1921 to February 1922 revealed that the drive had met with a great success. The Akali Dal had emerged as a truly Sikh national organisation reflecting the Sikh national consciousness all over the Punjab, with perfect means of communications, and an individual Akali constituting a well disciplined unit in the *Jatha*. The Akali Dal was product of clever planning and reflected considerable organising ability. It encompassed all classes of the Sikhs - Jats, Khatris, Aroras, Mazhbis, sweepers, carpenters, labanas, reflecting the composition of population in different districts. Women were associated in increasing numbers.

The Akalis had essentially become a rural movement. The brain behind the movement was, however, supplied by the educated Sikh townsmen of professional, trading and shop keeping classes.[100] When in September 1921, the SGPC decided to raise a *Shahidi Jatha*, (martyrs squad) of 5,000 to carry further the Gurdwara reform movement, quotas were fixed for all districts based on their population, so as to reflect all areas and all classes of the Sikhs. Occasionally, Akalis wore turbans neither black nor blue but saffron, the colour of martyrdom which re-emerged once again in Punjab following the Operation Bluestar.

The Akali volunteers vow ran thus: "In the presence of *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, I promise that I will present my body and soul for the reformation of the Gurdwaras. In this work I will always obey the command of my Jathedar, and even if in great distress I will not offend anyone by word or action."[101]

The Akali movement for taking over of mismanaged gurdwaras was resumed at a low key in September 1921, with workers showing their presence in Teja and Hothian in Gurdaspur district. But it was the British faux pas in taking over the keys of Golden Temple that gave the movement a great momentum.

The Executive Committee of the SGPC on October 29, 1921, adopted a resolution asking its Vice-president, Sunder Singh Ramgarhia (Manager of Golden Temple appointed by the British in 1919) to handover the keys of the treasury to its President, Kharak Singh. Ramgarhia consulted the Deputy Commissioner. The Punjab Government, on being informed, issued him certain instructions as a result of which he, on November 8, deposited the keys of the treasury with the Indian Magistrate, who in turn deposited it with the Government Treasury. He also resigned as the Sarbrah of the Golden Temple. The government mistakenly believed that the SGPC wanted to use

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Gurdwara resources for political purposes. It appointed Hony. Capt. Bahadur Singh as the new Sarbrah.

That created a crisis situation and invited all a round condemnation. The SGPC now constituted a Publicity Bureau with Prof. Teja Singh at its head to project its case to the general public. The Bureau did a commendable job in reaching the remote corners of the Sikh world.

Faced with hostility all around, the government was nonplused. The SGPC did not permit the newly appointed manager to function. Perspiring in the presence of Kharak Singh, he agreed to resign. The official repressive policy and awarding of sentences to Akali volunteers who refused to put up any defence on the plea that they were non-cooperators, added to their prestige and popularity.

The government, to its chagrin, found that no Sikh was willing to accept the office of Sarbrah at its hands. Also, it was unsuccessful in playing the Hindus against the Sikhs in this matter. The government instituting a case in the Keys Affair was regarded as a waste of time, as no Sikh was coming forth to contest the position of the SGPC. In a significant statement before the Court, Kharak Singh claimed that as President of the SGPC, or of Sikh Panth, his position was like that "of the President of the United States, France and Germany."[102] A government assessment conceded that, "In so far as the aims of the Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee are purely religious, there is now little doubt that it represents the general body of up-to-date Sikh opinion."[103]

Being on the horns of a dilemma, the government was left with no option but to negotiate with the SGPC, conceding the demand of Kharak Singh "the uncrowned King of the Sikhs". The government announced on January 12, 1922, its decision to finally withdraw from the management of the Darbar Sahib and leave the administration in the hands of the Sikh community, or SGPC, and allow the keys to be given over at once.

Even after the unconditional release of all those arrested in connection with the keys affair, Akali leadership refused to collect the keys from the District Magistrate. The government had to send an Indian Gazetted Officer to hand over the keys to Kharak Singh at a Diwan especially arranged for the purpose, in "circumstances of utmost humiliation", and that "The Panjab Government had humiliated itself to dust"[104] before the SGPC.

M.K. Gandhi's telegram to Kharak Singh read, "First battle for India's freedom won. Congratulations." This gave a wrong signal both to the Sikhs and the government. The Akali victory in Gurdwara matters, in fact, had nothing to do with India's freedom.[105] It unnecessarily bloated the extremist Akali ego and aggravated the government's hurt pride. Gandhi's gesture was fraudulent in character, loaded and futile. It neither helped to change his outlandish assessment of the Akali movement, nor mitigate the Hindu opposition to gurdwara reforms, as we shall see later.

The Central Sikh League resolved in January 1922 to increase its participation in the non-cooperation campaign but wisely placed the proposed Akali *Fauj* (army) under its command, while the SGPC declared its intention to limit itself solely to religious concerns. Even a government study in February 1922 conceded that the contention of the SGPC that Akali movement was religious and non-political "cannot be lightly dismissed." But the same persons holding offices in the Sikh League and the SGPC complicated the position. Not only that, Kharak Singh and Sardul Singh Caveesher

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held the position of President and Secretary respectively of both the Central Sikh League and the Punjab Congress.

On the eve of its abject surrender on the Key question, the government sought to re-establish a relationship of mutual confidence with the Sikhs. The communique of January 11, 1922, was a calculated move. The reaction of unqualified triumph among the Sikhs on Keys affair was quite predictable. But there was need for some conciliatory gesture on the part of Tat Khalsa to mitigate the feelings of humiliation of the government. This was more so after Gandhi's withdrawal of non-cooperation movement which he termed a "Himalayan miscalculation" following the Chauri Chaura incident on February 5, 1922, and ratification of the decision by the Congress Working Committee a week later. Gandhi's promised Swaraj within one year ended in fiasco.

It was time now for the SGPC and the Akali leadership to sit down and do cool thinking, and not only reiterate the purely religious nature of the Gurdwara reform movement, but also to come out of Gandhi's snare of mixing politics with religion. And, there was an opportunity knocking at the door in the form of the projected visit of the Prince of Wales in the last week of February to Khalsa College Amritsar: he was willing to announce the raising of its status to that of a Sikh University, a la Aligarh Muslim University and Benaras Hindu University, promoting studies and research in Sikh history, religion and philosophy.[106] Only 16 months earlier, the faculty members of Khalsa College had risen to the occasion by not letting mixing of non-cooperation movement with the liberation of Khalsa College from the government control.

Now, there was all round failure, principally because the same set of Sikh leaders were holding offices in the Central Sikh League, SGPC and Punjab Congress. They failed to distinguish their functions -as head of SGPC and Akali Dal vis a vis Central Sikh League and Punjab Congress. The acceptance of office as President of Punjab Congress by Kharak Singh who claimed for himself the position like that of President of United States, France and Germany, as head of Sikh nation, was most unwise. That unnecessarily placed him in a subordinate position. In prevented him from taking a correct decision.

The Sikhs failed to realise that their fight was principally not only against Mahants, but also the elitist Hindus, whose representatives in the Panjab Legislative Council, as the 1921 debate showed, were deadset against the Tat Khalsa aspirations. The fight was not against the British. The failure to act now made them pay a heavy price in the form of Guru Ka Bagh sufferings, and the forced abdication of Maharaja of Nabha leading to Jaito *morcha*, agitation. These were quite unnecessary and could have been avoided. The fact that the Sikhs came out gloriously in both these agitations does not mitigate the failure to act rightly and well in time.

The goings on in the Punjab came to the sharp notice of the Viceroy's Council in the third week of February 1922. The general consensus was for immediate and severe action against the Akalis. It, however, had to await the departure of the Prince of Wales, freeing the police and the army from security duties. The British functionaries at various levels highlighted the defiance of authority that the Akalis were showing. The SGPC realised the gravity of the situation in view of possible wholesale repression and belatedly made some gestures of accommodation by countermanding the taking over of certain gurdwaras, and otherwise adopting a moderate attitude. Prof. Sahib Singh, Joint Secretary, SGPC, in his instructions issued to Akali Jathas on March 19, 1922, warned them of the government's resolve to crush the Akali movement by force. He advised them to pursue peaceful lines to avoid "fruitless sacrifices" and save "the sacred Gurdwaras and

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Akali movement from mutilation."[107] One wishes, that this type of wisdom had dawned on the Sikh leadership six weeks earlier.

The repressive methods adopted from March 20, by the police which was assisted by the army, led to arrest of 700 Akalis including Kharak Singh, in a fortnight. But as a result of Sahib Singh's advice, the local authorities reported that the Akali Jathas dispersed of their own accord. The deployment of troops became redundant and these were soon withdrawn. It, however, intensified the propaganda battle between the SGPC and the Punjab government over official repression and government's interference in Sikh religious affairs.

The undercurrent of official hostility blew up in August in the form of Guru Ka Bagh *morcha*, agitation. On instructions from the Home Secretary, District Magistrate Amritsar ordered the mass scale arrest of Akalis. The authorities obtained a complaint, from a reluctant Mahant, on cutting of useless *kikar* trees.[108] The institution of criminal proceedings against five Akalis looking after the Gurdwara on August 9, 1922, and their conviction the following day to 6 months rigorous imprisonment, for cutting trees provoked the Sikhs to assert their right. This made the authorities to wreck-, untold atrocities on thousands of Akali volunteers over a period of three months. It was remarkable the way the Akali volunteers offered themselves to be beaten mercilessly without raising an arm. They heroically kept the vow of non-violence taken before the Akal Takht. Pandit Madan Malaviya, Hakim Ajmal Khan and Rev. C.F. Andrews declared the beating most cowardly and inhuman. They showered high praise on the Akalis.

C.F. Andrew's description of the equipoise with which Akali volunteers bore, what he termed, the most cowardly and foul blows needs to be recalled. He wrote, "The vow (of non-violence) they had made to God was kept to the letter. I saw no act, no look, of defiance."[109] As to "the spirit of the suffering endured", he stated, "It was very rarely that I witnessed any Akali Sikh who went forward to suffer, flinch from a blow when it was struck. . . . The blows were received one by one without resistance and without a sign of fear."[110]

It was not for nothing that the Golden Hawk popularly associated with Guru Gobind Singh was sighted daily at Guru Ka Bagh, and gave the Guru's blessings to his devotees, and assured them success.

The government again, in view of adverse circumstance, sought an escape route. Through the good offices of Sir Ganga Ram, it extricated itself from a difficult position. Ganga Ram took on lease the Guru Ka Bagh on November 17, and handed over the same to the Gurdwara Committee. That resolved the basic falsely built-up issue. The volunteers numbering 5605 continued to languish in jail till Hindu-Muslim riots in Amritsar in April 1923; the Akalis constructive role gave the government an alibi to release them.[111]

The government pushed the Gurdwaras and Shrines Bill of 1922, the following day, through the Panjab Legislative Council in the teeth of opposition of both the Tat Khalsa and the Hindus. It was stillborn. Several Mahants after the cessation of the Guru Ka Bagh *morcha* voluntarily affiliated themselves to the SGPC, extracting liberal terms.

Gandhi was all the more piqued, firstly, at Akalis running a perfectly non-violent movement drawing encomiums all around whereas his movement had ended in a fiasco; and, secondly, at Hindu-Muslim riots extinguishing whatever good was left of his non-violent non-cooperation

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movement. However, the testimony of C.F. Andrews and others on Guru Ka Bagh Morcha, to Gandhi seemed bunkum. Being a typical egotist, he could not brook such encomiums being showered on the Akalis, about whom he had such serious reservations.

In mid-May 1923, Indulal K. Yajnik was transferred to stay with Gandhi in Yerwada Jail. He discussed with Gandhi "about the wonderful heroism and disciplined suffering of the Akali Sikhs, who carried out a most extraordinary species of satyagraha against their corrupt temple priests, and, incidentally against the Government forces allied with them." Gandhi was most disagreeable to the introductory opening of the subject. And, we can not do better than quote Yajnik on his discussions with Gandhi. which hurt him and "chilled my enthusiasm."

"He told me that he had read a good deal of literature about the Sikh religion and the Sikh religious campaigns, and also knew the Akalis well by experience, and he had come to the conclusion that their campaign fell far short of true *Satyagrah*, for he had no doubt that they harboured violence in their heart even when they appeared to welcome a hailstorm of bullets, swords and spears with apparent equanimity. Even the large numbers in which they marched on Nankana, and other shrines, served to show that they harboured in their hearts a species of violence. Hurt at such adverse judgement, I brought to his notice the generous encomium that had been showered on them by no less a person than Mr. C.F. Andrews, who had seen with his own eyes, these hefty men beaten and even killed during their successive struggles without even an attempt at retaliation. He heard all this and much more that I put before him. But while expressing the warmest admiration for their heroism, he rigidly stuck to his conclusions and refused to give his saintly blessing to such a semi-militant movement."[112]

The Akalis hardly had any breathing time when circumstances forced them to launch yet another agitation. Maharaja Ripudaman Singh of Nabha, well known for his pro-Tat Khalsa proclivities,[113] had a dispute with the Maharaja of Patiala, known for his pro-government role. He had no dispute with the Government of India, but as a result of mediation was forced to abdicate in July 1923. Col. Michin, who, with the help of troops and armoured cars, took the Maharaja by surprise on July 8, 1923, taunted him with the query, "Where is that Akali?" The announcement of deposition by the government the following day, helped raise a storm of protest against the Government interference in Nabha and was described as a challenge to the Akali movement.[114]

The Akali leadership formally took up the question of the restoration of the Maharaja on July 10. Before taking any drastic action, the elections to the SGPC which were due were completed by the end of July when all Khalsa Sikhs above 18 were permitted to vote. The new Committee took up the Nabha case more vigorously.

Tension mounted up. The Akalis in defiance of state orders continued to hold *diwan* indefinitely. The Nabha police in order to arrest all the Akalis, including the one reading the holy *Granth*, was said to have disrupted the *Akhand Path* (continued recitations of the holy Granth). This provided the *causes belli* for another Akali morcha, this time at Jaito. In a widely publicised resolution, the SGPC held the Government of India, responsible for the unbearable insult to Sikh scriptures.[115]

The SGPC started sending daily *Jathas*, to begin with of 25 persons from the Akal Takht, to Gurdwara Gangsar at Jaito, from September 14, 1923, to assert its right of free worship and resume

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the interrupted *Akhand Path* there, and for restoration of the Maharaja. This trial of strength lasted till the enactment of Gurdwara legislation bringing to fruition the Gurdwara reform movement.

The government was conscious that the issue behind the Sikh unrest was a religious one and stirred deep feelings among the community. It, therefore, permitted, the *Jathas* to move unhindered in the British territory and wanted to deal with them in the Nabha state territory. The *Jathas* once in Nabha territory were told to give an undertaking that they will not indulge in political activity, i.e. ask for restoration of Maharaja, and, on refusal, were arrested and dispersed to remote and inhospitable places. The government took, with serious concern, the political nature of the demand for restoration of the Maharaja of Nabha, on which it brooked no compromise. A policy of repression followed. A press communique charged the SGPC and the Akali Dal with "sedition and conspiracy to overawe Government". Both the organisations, on October 12, 1923, were declared unlawful. 50 member of the SGPC were arrested and charged with conspiracy to wage war against the King Emperor.[116]

The remaining members of the SGPC filled the vacancies and carried on the agitation. The sufferings drew countrywide attention and also support of the Indian National Congress which at its Delhi session in 1923 deputed Jawaharlal Nehru, Principal A.T. Gidwani and K. Santanam to go to Jaito for an on the spot study. They were arrested and sentenced to two had a half years imprisonment in September. Motilal was greatly perturbed, and, as a result of his efforts, they were released in November 1923 after giving an undertaking to leave Nabha immediately. However in his *Autobiography*, (1936), Jawaharlal untruthfully wrote that "there as no condition attached" to their release.[117]

Jawaharlal, at the time, was quite upset at his father's attitude and Motilal was no less disappointed at his son's nonchallant behaviour which was against the family traditions. Motilal asked his son to ponder as to why, when Gandhi, Malaviya, Andrews and others were involved, he was holding aloof? He, at that stage, apprised Jawaharlal of the story of transformation of Kauls into Nehrus, beginning with the land grant by Emperor Farrukhsiyar in 1716 to the son of Ganga Dhar Kaul alias Gangu Brahmin as a belated recognition for his services to the Mughal empire.[118] Motilal justified the action of Ganga Dhar Kaul, as, in his views, Guru Gobind Singh's creation of the Khalsa constituted a direct threat to Brahmin ism. Jawaharlal being a dutiful son and a conscientious Brahmin fell in line, and there was a perceptible change in his attitude towards the Akalis.[119] Henceforth, the family traditions constituted the overriding influence in Jawaharlal's attitude towards the Sikhs.

The arrest of top Congress leaders at the time added fuel to the fire. The Congress at its Sabarmati Session in November 1923 and again at Kakinada the following month, extended support to the Akalis. Maulana Mohammad Ali, President of the Congress described it as "a fight of faith against falsehood."

Learning from experience, of the need to have committed Sikh members in the Punjab Legislative Council to push through the Gurdwara reforms, the Akalis fought the December 1923 elections to the Sikh seats in the Legislative Council. They won all but one of them.[120] They were quite pleased with the results.

In January 1924, the Akalis were forced to undertake another agitation at Gurdwara Bhai Pheru in Lahore District whose Mahant resiled from an earlier agreement and charged the Akalis

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with trespass, leading to their arrest and conviction. Batches of 25 started to present themselves for arrest, resulting in 4,000 arrests till September 1925 when the *morcha* was suspended.

The arrest of the second batch of 62 SGPC members and Akali leaders on January 7, 1924, signified the government's move to smash the movement. The Akalis faced the challenge with firm resolve. They announced despatch of a *Shahidi Jatha* (martyrs squad) of 500 to leave Amritsar on February 9, 1924, reaching Jaito on February 20-21, the third anniversary of Nankana tragedy. Dr. Saifuddin Kitchlu, Principal A.T. Gidwani and Mr. S. Zimmand of *New York Times* who were with the Jatha on February 21, before it entered Nabha territory, testified that the Jatha was moving in perfect order and non-violence, was unarmed when it was fired upon in the afternoon, leading to about 100 dead and 200 wounded.[121] About 700 Sikhs including the members of the Jatha and accompanying crowds were arrested.

To justify its action, the government in a communique on February 22, alleged that a Jatha of 6,000 Akalis armed with fire arms, *chhavis* and spears entered the Nabha territory and fired. bullets at the Administrator. This was denied by eye witnesses including Dr. Kitchlu, Gidwani and Zimmand. Zimmand wrote to Gandhi, "I observed carefully the Jatha and the crowds. . . and to the best of my knowledge the Jatha, and the crowd following the Jatha, were not armed, and behaved in a peaceful manner."[122] On February 27, 1924, 47 members of Central Legislative Assembly including M.A. Jinnah, Sir Mohammad Yaqub and Pt. M.M. Malaviya wrote to the Home Secretary asking for enquiry into Jaito Affair. They also moved an adjournment motion to discuss the happenings in Jaito. It was not allowed.

As against that, the antenna of M.K. Gandhi's over-fertile, brain picked up the signals of government's communique and also government's contentions over the last two years that what the Akalis really wanted was not the gurdwara reforms but the restoration of Sikh rule in the Punjab. His study of Sikhism, as he told Indulal K. Yajnik, told him that Sikhism and non-violence were poles apart. His mind was already occupied in making important formulations on non-violence using the Akali behaviour pattern during the Guru Ka Bagh *morcha* and now the Jaito *morcha* as laboratory test cases. He was stunned at the phenomenal leadership pattern of the Akalis, and that too in running a non-violent struggle, without his being associated with it. He thought that the creed of non-violence was his baby and the Akalis had no right to run away with it.

By the time, Gandhi had come under the baneful influence of Lala Munshi Ram alias Swami Shraddhanand and blessed his *shuddhi* movement (for reconversion of Muslims into Hinduism), subject to the condition that there was no attack on the Qoran. The impact of Shraddhanand clouded Gandhi's mind. Firstly, from at least 1924, he shied away from Hindu-Muslim unity. Secondly, he relentlessly pursued his strategy to overwhelm the Sikhs. Another evil influence was that of K.M. Panikkar, looking after the Congress-established Akali Sahayak Bureau to help the Akalis. He was dead set against the Akalis running an agitation for completion of the ruptured *Akhand Path* at Jaito, and also like Gandhi had misgivings about the non-violent character of the Akali movement. He was against the Akali organisation, and the Sikhs being exempted from the Arms Act to permit them keeping the *kirpan*, which he regarded as a threat to other communities.

Gandhi threw his bombshell on the Akalis on March 4, 1924, when in contravention of earlier Congress resolutions he wanted the Akalis to separate the *Akhand Path* issue from that of restoration of the Maharaja of Nabha, and run two separate agitations. He also brought in his advice, tendered after the Nankana tragedy, to refer to arbitration the disputes over historic

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gurdwaras and "that the movement is neither anti-Hindu nor anti any other race or creed." In Gandhian terminology there was a Hindu race, a Muslim race, a Sikh race, and other races inhabiting Punjab and India. Last, but not the least, he wanted the SGPC to affirm that it "has no desire for the establishment of Sikh *Raj*" and further that the SGPC "is purely a religious body and, therefore, as such can have no secular object or intention."[124] That was gratuitous and showed the extent to which his mind was caught in mire. The SGPC and Akali Dal had already been politicised because of him by adopting non-cooperation and *Swadeshi*, and fighting Punjab Legislative Council elections in December last. As to the desire to establish the 'Sikh *Raj*' Gandhi, had something more to say, and we shall come to that shortly.

Some Akali leaders met him to explain their stand on the Nabha issue, and Gandhi again on March 9, reiterated his advice to separate the *Akhand Path* and the Nabha issues.[125] Not content with that, he started issuing Open Letters to the Press casting aspersions on non-violent character of the Akali movement. He also indulged in dialectical semantics about violence, passive violence, non-violence, passive resistance, civil disobedience, and satyagraha, all derived from the working of his overfertile mind on the pragmatic Akali movement, which for him served as a functional laboratory.

Because of Gandhi's adverse propaganda, the Akalis in their letter of April 20, 1924, to him made a gallant gesture dissociating the *Akhand Path* issue from the Nabha issue completely, and emphatically denied any aspirations to establish the Sikh *Raj*.[126] This did not satisfy Gandhi who in next salvo in the *Young India*' of June 26, 1924, while lauding the Akalis, formulated basic, postulates for his successors to follow for all times to come. Precisely, he wrote:

> Ulterior motives and ambition for the establishment of Sikh *Raj* are imputed to them. The Akalis have disclaimed any such intention. As a matter of fact, no disclaimer is necessary, and none can prevent such an attempt being made in the future. A solemn declaration made by all the Sikhs can easily be thrown on the board if ever their successors entertain any such unworthy ambition.[127]

Hence, the policy of continuous distrust and destablisation of the Sikhs pursued by Congress leaders since independence.

Assisted by Gandhi's salvos against the Akalis, Sir Malcolm Hailey, who took over as Lt. Governor of Punjab in May 1924, initiated a subtle policy of creating pro-establishment groups loyal to the government. The landlords/landed gentry, some retired army personnel and civil pensioners were organised into Sewak (service) or Sudhar (reform) Committee. By October 1924, the formation of provincial level Sikh Sudhar Committee was announced. A Jatha organised by it was received at Jaito and after giving the requisite undertaking was permitted to perform the interrupted *akhand path* on October 21-23, 1924. This undercut the SGPC which had so far sent 13 Jathas apart from one from Bengal. It sent another three jathas apart from one from Canada before restrictions on *akhand path* at Jaito were removed in April 1925. The Akalis performed 101 *akhand path* as a sort of penance for disruption of one *akhand path* two years earlier, and the process was completed by August 6, 1925.

At this critical stage, when Hailey was undercutting the Akalis by Sudhar Committees, nationalist leaders like Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and Mohammad Ali Jinnah came to their rescue. Malaviya first drafted a Gurdwara Bill in consultation with the Akalis and wanted the Sikh

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members of the Punjab Legislative Council to move it. And, Hindu members to support it. In case it fell through, he proposed to move an All India Gurdwara Bill in the Central Legislative Assembly as there were Gurdwaras outside Panjab as well.[128]

This took the sails out of Hailey who now realised the poignancy of the Sikh demand and conceded the initiative to the SGPC and the Sikhs themselves to draft a permanent Gurdwara Bill. As a result, the Sikh Gurdwaras and Shrines Bill of 1925 on the principles enunciated by the Tat Khalsa was put on the anvil. The bill envisaged the establishment of a board of management of all Sikh gurdwaras and shrines based on universal adult franchise of Sikhs aged 21 years or over. The Bill defined a Sikh who made the declaration: "I solemnly affirm that I am a Sikh, that I believe in the *Guru Granth Sahib*, that 1 believe in the Ten Gurus and that I have no other religion."[129]

A *patit* (apostate) was excluded from membership of the Gurdwara Committees - the definition of *patit* being left to the Sikh Gurdwara Judicial Tribunal, set up under the Act. *Sehajdharis*, who on their own admission were Hindus, stood apart and obviously had no role in the Gurdwara management. The Bill ensured that the control over all Sikh religious institutions would effectively pass on to the Khalsa Sikhs.

The publication of the Bill raised a furore among the Hindus - *Sehajdharis*, Udasis and Nirmalas - who contended that Sikhism was never a separate religion, apart from Hinduism.

Even M.K. Gandhi indirectly tried to harden the Hindu resistance to accepting Sikhism as an independent religion. It was Guru Gobind Singh's creation of the Khalsa that had, in the eyes of those having superficial knowledge of Guru Nanak's mission, set the Sikhs apart from the Hindus. In a write up in the *Young India* of April 9, 1925, he described Guru Gobind Singh as "a misguided patriot" for advocating the use of force in certain circumstances, but showed his reverence for Lord Krishna who "is Lord of the Universe, the creator, preserver, and destroyer of us all" from the application, for "He may destroy because He creates."[130]

What Gandhi was driving at was made explicit in his write up in the *Young India* of October 1, 1925 (even after the adoption of Gurdwara Bill in July) in response to Mangal Singh's bringing to his notice the unusual condemnation of his slanderous views. He wrote, "My belief about the Sikh Gurus is that they were all Hindus. . . I do not regard Sikhism as a religion distinct from Hinduism. I regard it as part of Hinduism and the reformation in the same sense that Vaishnavism is."[131]

Vaishnavism, historically, had served as a vehicle for absorption of heterodox creeds/religions by declaring their gods or prophets as Avatars of Vishnu, and subject them to accept caste system and fall within the framework of *Varna Ashram Dharma*. It was in this process that the first *Trithankra* of the Jains who do not believe in God, and Lord Buddha were accepted Avatars of Vishnu in the eighth- ninth century. Gandhi's evil intentions towards Sikhism were quite explicit.

This was sinister coming from a man who later was acclaimed the father of the nation - a 'nation' whose 'father' did not recognise Sikhism as a separate religion and could assume the legitimate role of undermining its independent entity.

Not surprisingly, the Hindu members of Punjab Legislative Council opposed the Sikh Gurdwara and Shrines Bill. Raja Narendra Nath, and Dr. Gokal Chand Narang, who had earlier

written profusely about the Sikh nation and Sikh nationalism,[132] now representing Hindus and *Sehajdharis* respectively appended minutes of dissent in the select committee. They wanted the last part of definition of Sikh "that I have no other religion" to be deleted, and even objected to disqualification of *patits* (apostates).

The Bill introduced by Tara Singh of Moga, as a Private Members Bill, was adopted by the Punjab Legislative Council on July 8, 1925, and the earlier Act of 1922 repealed. It was enforced from November 1, 1925. Speaking on the occasion, Tara Singh said that during the Gurdwara reform movement, Akalis suffered 30,000 men and women behind bars, 400 dead and 20,000 injured, besides dismissals from services, withdrawals of Jagirs and Pensions, confiscation of properties and imposition of fines, etc. These were not refuted by official members. Giani Nahar Singh, a contemporary, put the figures at 40,000 behind bars and 500 dead. With the enactment of Gurdwara Act, came to fruition, after a bitter struggle and a great deal of sacrifices, the Sikh efforts to assert their identity.

Hailey, however was a success in sowing seeds of discord among the solid Sikh community. He did not believe in the policy of forget and forgive. He wanted only those among the Gurdwara prisoners to be released who gave an undertaking to implement the Gurdwara Act. Some came out after giving an undertaking, others followed mostly in early 1926 after completion of their sentences. This, unnecessarily, caused a schism in the two sections, those who gave an undertaking led by Mehtab Singh and came into power in the SGPC, and those who did not, led by Kharak Singh who seized power the following year.

Though a compromise was effected between the groups and they decided to sink their differences, these again cropped up causing disunity in the Sikh Panth around clash of personalities, to the hilarity of the forces which opposed the assertion of separate Sikh identity.[134]

It was worse that this prevented the Sikh community from putting its bead together and taking stock of the situation. This was very much needed. Various forces were interacting in Indian polity. It was necessary for them to identify those like Gandhi who emitted total hostility towards the Sikh aspirations and not to fall in his trap, in the times to come.

Footnotes:

1. Saint Nihal Singh, "The Sikh Struggle Against Strangulation", *Fortnightly Review*, London, 1912 (97), reproduced in Ganda Singh (ed) *Panjab Past and Present* (herein after referred to as *PP&P*), Vol. VII, April 1973 (*The Singh Sabha and Other Socio-Religious Movements in the Panjab 1850-1925*), pp. 16-17.
2. Ibid. Also, Ganda Singh in Ibid, p. ix.
3. Governor General, Lord Dalhousie, wrote in April 1849 that the "hatred of Sikhs against the British exceeds the national and religious animosity of Sikh against Afghans." See, Dolores Domin, "Some Aspects of British Land Policy in Panjab after 1849", *PP&P*. Vol. VIII, April 1974, pp. 16-17.
4. 8,000 persons were imprisoned during the first year of British administration of Punjab.
5. N.G. Barrier, *The Sikhs and Their Literature*. (Delhi, 1970), p. xix.
6. Khushwant Singh, *History of Sikhs*, Vol II (Princeton, 1966), pp. 112-13.
7. N.G. Barrier, *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. XXVlI (1968), pp. 525-26.

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8. Ian J. Kerr, "The British and the Administration of the Golden Temple 1859", *PP&P*, Vol X, October 1976, p. 308.
9. Ibid., p. 315: Teja Singh, *The Gurdwara Reform and the Sikh Awakening*, 1922 (Amritsar, 1984 reprint) p. 98.
10. For text, see Kerr, n. 8, pp. 317-19.
11. Ganda Singh, n. 1, p. xi.
12. For fuller account see, Ganda Singh, *Kukian di Vithia, 1944*.
13. Saint Nihal Singh, n. 1. p. xi.
14. Ernest Trump, *The Adi Granth or Holy Scripture of Sikhs*, (London, 1 877), p. viii: see also Barrier, n.3, p. xix-xx.
15. Surprisingly, during the last couple of decades or so. Dr. Trump has come to inspire scholars like W.H. McLeod (in his biography of *Guru Nanak* and later in his *Evolution of the Sikh Community* and other publications) with the same objective to denigrade Sikhism. What practically McLeod has written is only a rehash of Trump and the Arya Samaj literature on Sikhism in the last quarter of 19th century. If he were to write a dated, historical essay, he would have to give the opposite, Singh Sabha, viewpoint also. This, he had no mind to. Therefore, McLeod is projecting the whole thing as his *original* thinking, which certainly it is not. A rationale scholar who is interested to go into the sources of McLeod's studies should go through the available material in *Selections from Vernacular/ Native Newspapers Published in the Punjab*, available in the National Archives of India New Delhi, to go into both the sides of the controversy for a balanced view.
16. Kartar Singh and Gurdial Singh Dhillon, *Stories from Sikh History*, Book IX, (Socio-Religious Reform Movements 1849-1947), (Delhi, 1978) pp. 75-76.
17. Ibid. 18.
18. Ibid, p. 77-78.
19. Ibid, pp. 80-82.
20. Ibid, p. 89.
21. See, letter to editor from Giani Brahma Singh Brahma, Ajmer, The *Spokesman* Weekly (Delhi), November 28, 1983.
22. Following was the text of the *Hukamnamah:*

Ik Onkar Sati Gur Prasadi
Sri Akal Sahaye,
Akal Sahay,
Takht Sri Akal Bunga Sahib Ji,
Sri Darbar Sahib

We the undersigned Singh Sahibs, Poojaris, Takht Sri Akal Takht, Bungaji Sahib and Sri Darbar and Baba Atal Rai Sahibji, and Jhand Bunga Sahibji and Shaheed Bunga Sahibji, have examined the case of Gurmukh Singh, Secretary, and have found that this person at some places, contrary to the Guru's devotion, has shown disrespect to Sri Guru Granth Sahib and *Guru-Ansh* (descendents of Gurus) and Gurbani, orally and in print, and this leads to the conclusion that his faith is totally averse to the Sikh beliefs and for such reasons we all *Poojaris*, Granthis and Lambardaars of the aforementioned Gurdwaras, put in our hand that the said Gurmukh Singh is expelled from the Panth Khalsa. The said Gurdwaras shall not accept his *Ardaasa* and shall have no link with him.

Let all Sikh *sangats* be warned to avoid his association and following. Whosoever shall adhere to his following shall be deemed to be a *be-mukh* and be taken to be liable to *tankhah* (fine) and shall be punishable with the similar treatment.

This issues on 7th Chet, Samat 418 Guru Nanak - Christian Era March 18, 1887.

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Signatures: Present Singh Sahibs, Auhdedaars, Granthis and Pujari. 29 Panth dignitaries, including Bhai Narain Singh, Granthi, Gurdwara Tarn Taran. Ibid. See, also Jagjit Singh, *Singh Sabha Lehar*, (Ludhiana, 1974), pp. 30-40.

This *hukamnamah* was revoked only in September, 1995 at the Word Sikh Conference held under the auspices of Akal Takaht and the services of Prof. Gurmukh Singh appreciated.

23. Teja Singh, n. 9 p. 65.
24. Swami Dayanand reflected a considerable amount of flexibility in changing his interpretation of Vedas according to the need of the hour. For instance, in one of his discourses at Lahore, he said that the sun revolved around the earth. Back home, his admirers told him that people will think poor of Vedas as the latest scientific know ledge reveals that earth revolves around the sun. The following day, Swami Dayanand revised his interpretation of Vedas accordingly. See, Ditt Singh, *Sadhu Dayanand te Mera Sambad*, 1900, (Ludhiana, 1990 reprint) pp. 58-59.
25. See also, Dhanpati Pandey, *Swami Dayanand Saraswati* (Builders of Modern India, New Delhi, Publications Division, 1985), p. 49.
26. Norman G. Barrier, "The Arya Samaj and Congress Politics in the Panjab", *PP&P*, Vol. V, October 1971, pp. 344-45. See also, Parkash Tandon, *Punjabi Century*, (London, 1961), chapters 4 &5.
27. Kenneth W. Jones, *Arya Dharm: Hindu Consciousness in 19th Century Punjab*, (Delhi, 1976), p. 136.
28. See, Richard W. Fox, *Lions of the Punjab: Culture in the Making*, (Delhi, 1987) pp. 123-25 for community of views between Arya Samaj and the Sikh reformers.
29. Jones, n. 27, pp. 135-36.
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid, p. 40
32. Swami Dayanand's letter to Sardar Bhagat Singh of Ajmer, quoted in Ganda Singh, "The Origin of Hindu-Sikh Tension in Panjab", *PP&P* Vol. XI, October 1977, p. 326.
33. Jones, n. 27, p. 137.
34. See, Ganda Singh, n. 32.
35. Jones, n. 27, pp. 137-38.
36. Barrier, n. 5, p. xxi.
37. Ibid.
38. The institution started as a middle school in 1893 and started B.A. classes in 1899.
39. Kartar Singh, n. 16, pp. 117-22.
40. This resulted in publication of *The Sikh Religion*, *Its Gurus*, *Sacred Writings*, *and Authors*, by the Oxford University at Clarendon Press in 1909.
41. For details see, N. Gerald Barrier, "In Search of Identity" in *Language and Society in Modern India*, Editors: Robert I Crane and Bradford Spangenberg, (Delhi, 1981),pp. 11-15.
42. Macauliffe summed up his early impressions in two essays. In the first essay, 'The Holy Writings of the Sikhs (Allahabad, 1900), he let the Gurus speak for themselves. He emphasised the separate nature of Sikhism and the heroism inherent in recent Sikh tradition. In the second essay, 'The Sikh Religion and Its Advantage to the State' (Simla, 1903), he projected Sikhism as a distinct religion and a universal ethical system. "We have seen that Sikhism prohibits idolatry, hypocrisy, caste exclusiveness, the concremation of woman, the use of wine and other intoxicants, tobacco-smoking, infanticide, slander, pilgrimages to the sacred rivers and tanks of Hindus."
43. Barrier, n. 5, xxii; Fox, n. 28, p. 168.
44. Kenneth W. Jones, "*Hum Hindu Nahin:* The Arya Sikh relations, 1877-l905", *PP&P*, Vol. XI, October 1877. pp. 388-400.
45. Jones, n. 27, pp. 202-03.

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46. Ibid.
47. Ibid, p. 206.
48. Ibid, p. 207.
49. Ibid, pp. 208-09.
50. Ibid, p. 210.
51. S. Attar Singh of Bhadaur died in 1896, Professor Gurmukh Singh in 1898 and Bhai Ditt Singh in 1901, leaving behind Bhai Jawahar Singh and Bhai Maiya Singh in the field.
52. Kartar Singh and Dhillon, n. 16. p. 99.
53. Jones, n. 27, p. 210.
54. Ibid, p. 211.
55. For text of judgement, see Teja Singh n. 9, p. 64.
56. Ibid, p. 101.
57. Teja Singh, "The Singh Sabha Movement" in Ganda Singh (ed), n. 1, p. 44.
58. "Chief Khalsa Diwan - Fifty Years of Service", in Ibid, p. 71.
59. N.G. Barrier, "The Sikh Resurgence 1849-1947: An Assessment of Printed Sources and Their Location" in W. Eric Gustafson & Kenneth W. Jones, *Sources on Punjab History* (Delhi, 1975, p. 227).
60. N.G. Barrier, n. 5, p. XLIII.
61. D. Petrie, "Memorandum on Recent Developments in Sikh Politics," (1911) PP&P, Vol IV, October 1970, pp. 292.
62. Munsha Singh Dukhi, *Jiwan Bhai Sahib Bhai Mohan Singh Vaid*, (Delhi 1989, reprint), p. 72.
63. N.G. Barrier, n. 59, p. 232.
64. Ibid,: Kartar Singh, n. 16, p. 108.
65. Macauliffe attended the Sikh Educational Conference at Rawalpindi in 1910. No body went to receive him at the Railway Station, and the promoters of the Conference refused to include a Resolution saying that the work was worthy of Sikh's consideration. Broken in health and more in spirits on account of debt incurred in publication of the volumes, he left for England where he died in 1913. It was, thereafter, that the Sikh Educational Conference adopted a resolution appreciating his services. See, Teja Singh, n. 57, pp. 40-41.
66. See, Rajiv A. Kapur, *Sikh Separatism: Politics of Faith* (Delhi, 1987), pp. 46-47.
67. Jones, n. 27, p. 311.
68. Census Report 1911, Part I, p. 292, quoted in Kapur, n. 66, p. 41.
69. For text, see n. 61, pp. 302-79.
70. Ibid, p. 301.
71. For full story see Sangat Singh, chapter on "Gurdwara Rikab Ganj Affair" in *Freedom of Delhi*, (Delhi, 1973), pp. 198-220.
72. For details, see, Teja Singh, n. 9, pp. 67-75 & 319-20.
73. Kapur, n. 66, p. 73.
74. Report on Constitutional Franchine, p. 7, quoted in Kapur, n. 66, p. 80.
75. Ian Colvin, *The Life of Gen. Dyer*, (London, 1929), pp. 201-02.
76. Guru Gobind Singh had used *kirpan*, *kharag* and *talwar* as synonyms. High Court Judgement upholding the Sikh position came rather late.
77. Teja Singh, n. 9, p. 81.
78. Akalis owed their origin to Guru Gobind Singh and served as self appointed guardians of the faith. See, Kapur, n. 66, p. 92: Teja Singh, n. 9, pp. 305-16.
79. Kapur, n. 66, p. 155.
80. Cf. Mohinder Singh, *The Akali Movement*, (Delhi, 1978), p. 21.
81. For full story see Cf. Teja Singh, n. 9, pp 105-08.

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82. Cf. Teja Singh, "Khalsa College Amritsar" in Ganda Singh (ed) n. 1, pp. 86-94.
83. Teja Singh, n. 9, p. 135.
84. Ibid, p. 123.
85. C.M. King's letter to Baba Kartar Singh Bedi spelling out the government policy came in for indictment by Sir Valentine Chirol for not spelling out their duties vis a vis their rights.
86. For full story, see, Teja Singh, n. 9, pp. 148-96.
87. Ibid.
88. Speaking on March 3, 1921, at Nankana Sahib, M.K. Gandhi stated that he had been told 'that your kirpans and your battle axes were part of your dress. So let them be. But I assure you that the time had not come for their use."
89. Exphasis added *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (hereinafter referred to as *CW*) (Delhi Publications Division - published in various years). Vol. 19, p. 401.
90. Ibid.
91. Nirad C. Chaudhuri, *Thy Hand*, *Great Anarch*! *India 1921-52*, (London, 1987), p. 48.
92. Cf. Sardul Singh Caveeshar, "The Akali Movement" 1944 in Ganda Singh (ed), n. 1, p. 141.
93. Teja Singh, n. 9, pp. 70-71.
94. For details sec, V.M. Smith(of Criminal Investigation Department, Memorandum), "The Akali Dal and Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, 1921-22", reproduced in *PP&P*, Vol I, October 1967, pp. 292-99.
95. Kapur, n. 66, p. 119.
96. Teja Singh, n. 9, p. 229.
97. Fauja Singh, "Akalis and the Indian National Congress", *PP&P*, Vol XV, October 1981, p. 455.
98. Teja Singh, n. 9, p. 233.
99. See n. 94.
100. Ibid.
101. Ibid, p. 290. It stood Akalis in goodstead for over six decades in running non-violent and peaceful Guru ka Bagh, Bhai Pheru and Jaito morchas against the British, two Punjabi Suba morchas against Nehru, two against Indira's draconian emergency and for liberation of Delhi Gurdwaras, and finally the Dharam Yudh morcha in 1980s which was subverted by Indira Gandhi's introduction of violence in Sikh politics.
102. Sohan Singh Josh, *Akali Morchian da Itihas*, (Amritsar, 1972), p. 125; Mohinder Singh, n. 80, p. 47.
103. Smith, n. 94, p. 277.
104. John Maynard, "The Sikh Problem in the Punjab, 1920-23", *Contemporary Review*, September 1923, reproduced in *PP&P* Vol. XI, April 1977, p. 139.
105. The refusal of Jawaharlal, Indira and Rajiv Gandhi after independence to enact All India Gurdwara Act even after their commitments to do so, points to that. The Brahminical Hindus would rather dissolve the Indian Union than permit consolidation of Sikhism.
106. Kapur Singh, *Saachi Sakhi*, (Jalandhar, 1972), p. 51.
107. Kapur, n, 66, p. 149.
108. Teja Singh, n. 9, p. 276.
109. Ibid, pp. 289-96.
110. Ibid, p. 296.
111. Ibid, pp. 303-04.
112. Indulal K. Yajnik, *Gandhi: As I Knew Him* (Delhi, 1943 edn), pp. 299-300.
113. It was Tikka Ripudaman Singh of Nabha who had introduced Anand Marriage Act in the Imperial Legislative Council in 1908 which was adopted the following year.

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114. Mohinder Singh, n. 80, p. 66.
115. Kapur, n. 66, p. 175.
116. Ibid, p. 177; Kartar Singh, n. 16, p. 229.
117. For text of Nabha Orders, see *PP&P*, Vol VIII, April 1974, pp. 200-01; Jawaharlal Nehru, *Autobiography* [1936] (Delhi, 1980 reprint), p. 114.
118. Talks in 1955-56 with Sodhi Pindi Dass of Bharat Naujawan Sabha and a member of Hindustan Socialist Republican Army to which belonged Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru. Jawaharlal Nehru in 1920s was leaning towards the extremists who had a lot of interaction with him. Motilal Nehru's discourse to his son about Gangu origin of the family was talked of among the extremists and revolutionaries, who also monitored his various moves, some with Gandhi's assistance to hold Jawaharlal back from a more active role in anti-imperialist struggle. See also, Chapter 3, n. 14 ante.
119. Nehru to Kitchlu, 9 April 1924, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*. Vol II, p. 152.
120. Kartar Singh, n. 16, p. 232.
121. SGPC Communique, quoted in Ibid, p. 244.
122. For text, see Mohinder Singh, n. 80, pp. 212-15. Gandhi was released from jail on February 5, 1924.
123. Sohan Singh Josh, n. 90, pp. 356-60.
124. Cf. *CW*, Vol 24, pp. 283-85.
125. Ibid. Vol. 23, pp. 231-54.
126. Josh, n. 90, pp. 353-54.
127. *CW* Vol. 24, pp. 283-85.
128. Mohinder Singh, n. 80, pp. 134-35.
129. For text, see M.L. Ahluwalia, *Gurdwara Reform Movement 1919-1925*, *An Era in Congress-Akali Collaboration*. (Delhi, 1985), pp. 286-364.
130. *CW*, Vol. 26 pp. 486-92.
131. 131. Ibid, Vol. 28, p. 263.
132. He was awarded Ph.D. by London University for his thesis. *Transformation of Sikhism*, well known book published by him.
133. Mohinder Singh, n. 80, p. 137.
134. After Indian independence, Sir Malcolm Hailey served as a loadstar to these forces gathered together under Gandhian flag.

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5
The Sikhs And Indian Independence
(1925-1947)

The Sikhs made sacrifices wholly out of proportion to their demographic strength for India's fight for freedom. Their contribution to the number of persons sent to the gallows, sentenced to transportation for life, otherwise imprisoned and subjected to fines was, to say the least, overwhelming.[1] But the returns for them were totally inadequate. On independence, the power was transferred to the All India Muslim League led by Mohammad Ali Jinnah in Pakistan, and the Indian National Congress led by Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, ably assisted by Jawaharlal Nehru and Vallabhbhai J. Patel in residual India. The Sikhs, who constituted the third party with whom the British negotiated for transfer of power, drew blank except for certain paper, not real, safeguards. And for their achievements, the Muslim League did not suffer a single man going to gaol, much less to transportation for life or gallows; while the Congress under Gandhi led three sporadic movements, by fits and starts - the Non-Cooperation Movement 1920-22, the Civil-Disobedience Movement 1930-32, and the Quit India Movement, 1942. Gandhi did not represent the sum total of Indian nationalism, nor was the Congress analogous to the independence movement. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan aptly described the colourful ceremony, in what later came to be known as Ashok Hall of Rashtrapati Bhavan, in Delhi, on the night of August 14-15, 1947, as a windfall which no doubt it was both for the Muslim League in Pakistan and the Congress in India.

The Sikh discomfiture was due both to the inadequacy of Sikh leadership which proved no match to Gandhi and Jinnah to which we shall turn later, and the nature of Indian nationalism personified by Gandhi.

The sense of Hindu nationalism, arose amidst the sense of defeat at the hands of the Muslims and went on swelling in volume during the entire Muslim rule.[2] "In the sphere of emotions and ideas no Hindu was expected to give the allegiance of his heart to the Muslims, and no Hindu did"[3] His external servility went hand in hand with the emotional disaffection, beyond the conqueror's military or political power.[4] The Hindu nationalism spurted forth on the decline of Muslim power in the seventeenth and the early eighteenth centuries. The Maratha concept of 'Hindu-pad padshahi' - the imperial status of Hindus - aptly summed up the pan-Hindu aspirations.[5]

As against that, Islamic revivalism, now that Muslim power was on the decline, re-emphasised the community's links with the *Ummah* and attributed the fall to its delinking from the mainstream.

Amidst these corresponding and retrogressive mobilisations, the rise of liberal nationalism seeking separation of religious consciousness s from social mores was retarded, if not stillborn, and found limited acceptance. This paved the way for the rise of religious nationalism - Hindu nationalism(s), Muslim nationalism and a re-emphasis of Sikh nationalism. The Hindu nationalism articulated by the Shivaji and Gahesh festivals in Maharashtra by Bal Gangadhar Tilak, and by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's novel *Anand Math* in Bengal, and Swami Dayanand's Arya Samaj in the Punjab were disparate in character; the partition of Bengal provided an over-arching umbrella, with *Anand Math*[6] and one of its song *Bands Matram*[1], which eventually was accepted as one of the two Indian national anthems, getting primacy in providing the ideological basis. The inspiration in all cases was hostility to the Muslims: in addition in Punjab it was also to the Sikhs.

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The fusion or consummation of various brands of local Hindu nationalisms was not complete till the assumption of leadership by M.K. Gandhi who emerged as a Hindu holy man, a typical *Sadhu* or saint under a political cloak. Gandhi certainly was one time inheritor of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's mantle of Hindu nationalism.

Since Gandhian brand of Hindu nationalism was camouflagged as secular nationalism it would be of interest to ascertain, what is secularism and wherein the Gandhian brand fitted therein.

The Europeans, particularly the French leaders of thought, emphasised that to carve out a secular society and integrate different classes and communities into a modern national entity, it was essential that the religious consciousness and values be purged altogether from popular consciousness and social concerns. The societal set-up was to be integrated on the basis of traditional social values. There was successful revolt against priestly domination.

It was rather unfortunate that no segment of Indian national movement was willing to concede that traditional values in India had the potentiality to integrate the Indian society which continued to be propelled by "the tremendous strength of religious consciousness among the popular classes."[8] Hindu social system struck at the roots of individual and national identity.

Gandhi, on assumption of Indian leadership following *Satyagraha* against the Rowlatt Bills, sought "to sharpen as well as widen the moral sensibility of Hindu society" and used religious imagery like *Swaraj, Ram Rajya* and *Dharma Rajya,* as also, "symbols, myths and images which had been ingrained in popular psyche over the centuries, by the folk saints of India" for nationhood and self-determination.[9]

The non-violent non-cooperation movement launched in 1920 was principally designed to canalise the Muslim discontent over the harsh terms imposed by the allies on Turkey at the Peace Treaty of Sevres in 1920 leading to the abolition of Khilafat, an extraterritorial issue; to it were also tagged to set aright the Punjab wrongs, and attaining *Swaraj* in one year. To his credit, it must be stated that Gandhi so hypnotised the people that no one raised a finger about his utterly fantastic and dubious proposition of *Swaraj* in one year. And, Gandhi rationalised the Hindu support to the Muslims by saying that he wanted to save the cow from the knives of Muslims and also establish *Swarajya* or *Ram Rajya, Dharam Rajya!* If the British by granting separate electorate to the Muslims and the Sikhs had taken religion into politics, Gandhi was now taking politics into religion.

What was the impact on the people? It was not that M.A. Jinnah and K.M. Munshi, who were in the thick of the movement and later poles apart, realised the gravity of Gandhi's pandering to the gallery which could have a deleterious effect; even people like Dr. S. Radhakrishnan who had not so far come into contact with Gandhi felt the pinch of his mixing religion with politics and playing to the Hindu gallery.[10] A Brahmin early in 1921 told Nirad C. Chaudhuri in exultation and raucous fanaticism that "He's come to re-establish Hinduism." Significantly, Gandhi while in Yerwada Jail in 1923 said, "We must learn to seal the image of Rama and Krishna on every yarn of the thread spun out of the spinning wheel."[11] And, this was the spirit in which people took Gandhi. Whether intended or not, his mass-movement gave expression to atavistic aspirations and prejudices of both the masses and the intelligentsia, and it was "the atavistic nationalism of the Hindus" that triumphed in the end.[12]

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A remarkable feature of his method, deductible from the non-cooperation movement of 1920-22, was his assumption of dictatorial, powers, sidelining other stalwarts in the Congress including C.R. Das, Motilal Nehru, Madan Mohan Malaviya, Lajpat Rai and others. He also forged a small group, the Working Committee, bypassing the unwieldy Subjects Committee. From mid-1923, he started signing himself "Bapu" to his co-workers in Congress reflecting his intentions and resolve to emerge as an absolutist and father figure in the Congress.

Following Hindu-Muslim riots in 1923, after his calling off *Satyagraha* without achieving any of his three objectives, and incidentally leaving the Khilaftists in the lurch without any alternative, he turned his back on Hindu-Muslim unity. He became a partisan of Hindu communal nationalism of Hindu Mahasabha, galvanised by Lala Lajpat Rai, with the assistance of Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, M.R. Jayakar, N.C. Kelkar, Purushottamdas Thakurdas, B.S. Moonje, Taraknath Das and V.S. Srinivasan.[13] Persuaded privately by Lajpat Rai, Gandhi visited Punjab, December 4-10, 1924, to meet the people affected by communal riots, especially those in Kohat (NWFP). He was a guest of Lala Lajpat Rai at Lahore where he met a cross section of Hindu and Muslim leaders. It was this visit to Punjab which brought about a metamorphosis, if it can be called that, in Gandhi's attitude towards Hindu-Muslim problem. Lajpat Rai, especially since 1923, was a changed man out "to forge greater unity and solidarity among all sections of the Hindu community and to unite them more closely as parts of one organic whole." He precisely advised the Hindus that "You must begin to take care of your interests as a community first and then as a nation and some times both simultaneously."[14] The pan-Hindu leaders under the aegis of Arya Samaj, especially Swami Shraddhanand reactivated *Sangathan* and *Shuddhi* movements. This made the Muslims to counter it with *Tanzim* and *Tabligh* movements. Gandhi gave a clean chit to Lala Lajpat Rai who in his words was "frank as a child" and blessed Swami Shraddhanand's move at *Suddhi* or reconversion of Muslims but stipulated that there should be no attack on the Qoran. He also pleaded with the Sanatanist Hindus to stop critical writings on the Arya Samaj, though he was greatly disappointed at the contents of *Satyarth Prakash*.[15] Gandhi had a high regard for Arya Samajists despite their "narrow outlook and a pugnacious habit" because "wherever we found Arya Samajists, there is life and energy." He vouchsafed that "Swami Shraddhanand believes in Hindu-Muslim unity", overlooking the fact that Shraddhanand wanted unity with the Muslims, the way a man wants unity with bread! Gandhi could not rise above his narrow sectarianism to see that Shuddhi and freedom struggle could not be carried on simultaneously by the same forces without causing a national disruption. It was not for nothing that M.A. Jinnah shortly afterwards said, that "You cannot get away from being a Hindu, if you are a Hindu."[16]

Jawaharlal Nehru who later emerged as Gandhi's heir-apparent, making an assessment of non-cooperation movement over a decade later, perceptibly observed that "the general Muslim outlook was. . . one of Muslim nationalism or Muslim internationalism, and not of true nationalism". Similarly, "the Hindu idea of nationalism was definitely one of Hindu nationalism" though it was difficult "to draw a sharp line between Hindu nationalism and true nationalism. . . as India is the only home of the Hindus and they form a majority there. It was thus easier for the Hindus to appear as full blooded nationalists than for the Muslims, although each stood for his own particular brand of nationalism."[17]

In short, in the words of Nirad C. Chaudhuri, "There is no true national resurgence in India because there are no true nationals."[18] Again, "The really strong passion which fed Indian nationalism was the Hindu xenophobia, which was created by the Hindu way of life and shaped their attitude to all who are not Hindus."[19]

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Maulana Abul Kalam Azad in the unexpurgated edition of his *India Wins Freedom* in a similar vein admits that the Congress was predominantly a Hindu body, national only in name, working to secure power for the Hindus and did not live up to its secular character. He pensively recounts unbecoming moves, out of communal considerations, by Sardar Patel and Dr. Rajendra Prasad ousting K.F. Nariman in Bombay and Dr. Syed Mahmud in Bihar from the leadership of the Congress Provincial Assembly Parties in 1937, to draw home the point of Congress, in practical parlance, not coming out successfully in its test as a truly secular and national organisation.[20] Also, for the same considerations, how Gandhi had built up Dr. Rajendra Prasad in Bihar.[21] Even after independence. Congress's commitment to secularism was skin deep.

The fact that Maulana Azad was President of the Congress from 1940 to 1946 and a leading member of the Cabinet in post-independence period adds poignancy to his views as to the character of the Congress that emerged in its final phase. He had the moral courage to record his views, though he chose to suppress them for 30 years after his death, not to embarrass his contemporaries, and expose their Hindu proclivities not withstanding their facile secular assertions to the contrary. In the process, he also upheld the Muslim League charge of his being a 'show boy' of Hindu Congress. One, however, wishes that the Sikh show boys, rather mercenaries, in the Congress pick up the moral courage to record their candid views.

In post-independent India, it has been fashionable for some people to speak of a third kind of nationalism, radical nationalism, represented by Jawaharlal Nehru.[22] But that remained only a figment of people's imagination. Jawaharlal was not an independent entity, and remained under the shadow at first of his father, and later of M.K. Gandhi, with its aftereffects remaining for another decade after Gandhi's death in 1948. Those who contend that Jawaharlal was radical or more secular in character should ponder over the fact that it was the Cabinet meeting presided over by him shortly after independence which took the decision to reconstruct Somnath Temple at government expense[23]. He played communal politics setting one section of society against the other, for Nehru admittedly was a racialist Brahmin.

A couple of side effects of assumption of leadership of the national movement by Gandhi may be recounted. He steered the national movement away from revolution by neatly putting forth that half of India was too weak to participate in violence and the other half unwilling to do so. He also warded off the interaction of democratisation of national politics with socialisation of means of production; his doctrine of trusteeship of wealth was, for its own reasons, acceptable to landed and industrial magnates who underwrote Gandhi and at his instance, gave regular doles to maintain various Congress leaders and their families working under his stewardship.

Similarly, Gandhi was not inaccessible to the British, for he was not against British imperialism as such. Nirad Chaudhuri opines that "All Hindu are traditionally imperialists, and they condemned imperialism only so far as British imperialism made them subject to an empire instead of its masters", that "the strongest political passion of ancient Hindu was directed towards conquest and domination" and this "conditions the attitude of the present Hindu ruling class."[24]

Significantly, Gandhi did not condemn British imperialism in South Africa. He not only sided with the British during the Boar war, but also during his over two decades of stay in South Africa did not utter a single word or write a single line for the sufferings of the black people. To him, Black Africa simply did not exist. He only protested against humiliations perpetrated on his

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own people.

The discernible British administrators, aware of Gandhi's support to the British during the Boar War, serving as a recruiting sergeant during the First World War, (when Home Rule Movement was at its peak) for which he was awarded Kaisar-i-Hind Medal, and his propensity to contain revolutionary terrorism and otherwise localise the impact of various movements, lionised Gandhi and never posed a serious challenge to his prestige and leadership in India. They rather helped to build him up. Gandhi's leadership of the national movement permitted the British to canalise it to the channels they wanted it to progress, and the end-results were not disappointing to them.

We shall revert later to the tactical nature of Gandhi's concept of non-violence in practice and see how he graduated into connivance and later approval of violence, though for obvious reasons he did not admit it. He came to practise hypocrisy on a vast scale at the national level. We have already taken note of his support to the British during the Boar war, and his serving as recruiting sergeant during the First World War.

In the previous chapter, we noticed how Gandhi felt ill at ease at his analysis of the assertion of Sikh national identity during the Akali movement and sought to asphyxiate it by at first suggesting arbitration between the forces of good and evil which he knew were outside the purview of arbitration, and then making a plea for postponement of the Gurdwara reform movement till the Indian independence when he hoped to deal with them in his own way, and from a position of strength. Since the Akalis did not fall prey to his chicanery, he openly came out against the Sikh aspirations during the Jaito agitation - and sought to cause them harm by casting aspersions on the non-violent character of the Akali movement, to the glee of British administrators. Despite the enactment of Gurdwara reform legislation, Gandhi was not reconciled to their emergence as an independent entity; he was out to subvert the Sikh position.

So far as the Sikhs were concerned, Gandhi constituted a totally hostile force and a dangerous threat. This was compounded by the religio-moral metaphysics in which he clouded his pronouncements, and the deference which the Sikh leaders thoughtlessly began to show him.

By the time of enactment of the Gurdwara Act of 1925, India was still passing through the phase of communal conflict. This led to the murder of Swami Shraddhanand in Delhi in 1926, which caused its downward course. Gandhi during the period had receded from the national scene and was keeping a low profile. Early in 1927, amidst the receding curve of Hindu-Muslim riots, Gandhi fired his next salvo against the Sikh assertion of independent entity. He gave expression to his atavistic inner cravings when, without any provocation, he stated at Gaya on January 15, 1927, that "there were only three religions in the world, namely Christianity, Islam and Hinduism." He would regard Buddhism and Sikhism as branches of Hinduism.[25] Gandhi, in the process, showed that he had not advanced from his village days! Since Buddhism, in Gandhi's views, was a branch of Hinduism, so would be Shintoism and by deduction Confucianism. What about Judaism? If it was not a part of Islam or Christianity, would Gandhi claim it to form a part of Hinduism? Would Gandhi claim Qadianis or Ahmadiyas, who have universally been disclaimed by the Muslims world, to form part of Hinduism? Was Gandhi's Hinduism broad enough to contain disparate non-conforming elements all over the world? Or, was it expressive of Hindu imperialism, or chauvinism? Whatever it was, there was no doubt about Gandhi's intolerance of Sikhism.

Badly split following the enactment of Gurdwara legislation in 1925, the Sikhs did not take

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stock of the situation - the mistakes they committed during the course of the movement, the forces arraigned against them and the course they should follow in their national self-interest. The divisions created in their ranks, at first by Gandhi, and, later by Hailey only tended to atomise them.

The position of the Sikhs was peculiar in the Punjab. The Muslims, a majority in the Punjab, were overall minority in India. The position of Hindus was the reverse, and both of them suffered from the majority-minority or minority-majority syndrome. The Sikhs were a minority in the Punjab and had an infinitesimal overall position. The Punjab to them was not only their homeland but also their holy land. Because of their demographic position, they sometime took supra-national position on national issues which was temerarious to the two major communities.

Two major issues which confronted the Sikhs in the second half of 1920s were, the quantum and mode of representation in the provincial and central assemblies and inclusion of Sikh colour in the national flag. On both these issues, they drew a blank. It was during this period that Gandhi perfected the strategy of offering the Sikhs empty promises together with putting off the issues by referral to committees and commissions. That the Sikhs fell into the snare laid for them was their misfortune and showed lack of application.

As against that, the Muslims had a better sense of history and the interplay of the forces at work. For instance, the Muslims of all shades of opinion who met Gandhi in December 1924 at Lahore were of 'one mind' as regards their political demands. Broadly, they were unanimously against the Muslims being reduced to a minority or even equality with other communities in representation in Muslim majority provinces.[26] This impinged on the Sikh position in the Punjab. The Muslims were willing to accept population as the basis of representation provided the same principle was made applicable to representation in local bodies, services and central legislature too. From the All Parties Conferences held in Delhi in January 1925, March 1927 and February 1928, it was clear that the Muslims were determined to secure an effective guarantee of protection of their vital interests, vis. retention of their majority in Bengal and the Punjab, whether by separate electorate or by joint electorate with representation on population basis, apart from the separation of Sind from Bombay, thereby creating another Muslim majority province.

Following the lead of Maulana Hasrat Mohani, a prominent Muslim League leader for the formation of Hindu and Muslim majority provinces under a Federal government, Lala Lajpat Rai in November-December 1924, in a series of articles in the *Tribune* had advocated splitting the Punjab with Ravi as the boundary into East and West Punjab provinces apart from the formation of East Bengal and Sind provinces to solve the communal tangle.[27] That provided a rational solution to both the Hindu and Muslim leaders. But the Hindu leaders of the Congress and Hindu Mahasabha failed to rise to the occasion and come out with radical solutions to the intractable problems.

The goings on at All Parties Conferences should have come as an eye opener to the Sikhs to unite on one platform and chart out an independent course. It was obvious that the hands of the Hindus and the Muslims were tied by the Lucknow Pact of 1916 wherein the Sikhs did not figure at all. And, even now, both the Hindus and the Muslims were hostile to the Sikh claims. The Sikhs should naturally have looked to the British for fulfillment of their aspirations.

The appointment of the Simon Commission in November 1927 to review the working of reforms came at an odd time, for the Hindus and the Muslims as two communities were still involved in communal fracas. The boycott of the Commission by the Congress was quite

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understandable. The Akalis of both the groups followed suit as mere camp followers, as against the Muslim League which did not, keeping in view their national self-interests.

The Sikhs had their dose of disappointment in the Nehru Committee Report. The Sikhs, moved by national impulse and to pave the way for creation of integrated nationalism, advocated complete abolition of separate communal representation. But the Committee headed by Moti Lal Nehru never examined the Sikh problem in its proper perspective. It was seized of the Hindu-Muslim problem from all-India perspective on the basis of give and take between the two major communities. For Punjab, it recommended complete abolition of communal representation, whereas the Sikh position was for abolition of communal representation, not in isolation, but throughout the country as a process of nation-building. Mangal Singh, Sikh representative on the committee, came in for severe criticism. The Akalis, as also the Central Sikh League, rejected the Nehru Report. Later, in December 1928, they walked out of the All Parties Conference at Calcutta, after the amendment moved by Mehtab Singh of the Central Sikh League that 'communalism should not be made the basis of the future policy of India in any shape or form' was ruled out by Dr. M. A. Ansari, President of the Conference. Harnam Singh, however, asserted that Nehru Report's division of the country into Hindu-India and Muslim-India was not acceptable to the Sikhs.[28] Above all, Kharak Singh had basic objections to Nehru Committee's asking for Dominion Status instead of Complete Independence which he favoured.

After the Sikh walkout, a resolution that the Sikhs be given the same concessions as were accorded to the Muslims and the non-Muslims in other provinces was expected to be carried by a considerable majority but for the unexpected opposition of Moti Lal Nehru. He went back on his earlier assurance and swung the pendulum the other way.[29] Moti Lal Nehru, however, made a cryptic statement that "he wished he could blow the Punjab out of the map of India."[30] What he meant was not that he wanted to blast Hindus and Muslims out of Punjab, but the Sikhs who constituted an inconvenient third party that did not fit into the all India pattern![31]

Gandhi now entered the stage with a few palliative words." Personally, I think we have not done full justice to the Sikhs", he said, and wanted to ward off the threat, held out by Baba Kharak Singh, of the Sikhs boycotting the next Congress session in Lahore in December 1929.[32] The formation of the Sikh National Party by Congressite Sikhs was quite understandable, but not the decision of Master Tara Singh for fighting for Sikh rights from within the Congress. That showed he had little perception of the forces at work in the Congress.

Since the Muslim League in Calcutta in 1928 had broken with the Congress, all the efforts of Gandhi during 1929 were concentrated on winning over the Sikhs without yielding on the substance. Speaking at a Sikh meeting in Karachi in February 1929, he advised the Sikhs to be patient and not lose faith in the Congress.[33] In October 1929, he sent a message through Sardul Singh Caveesar to the Central Sikh League's Annual Conference at Lyallpur assuring that the question of Sikh representation was not closed but open for discussion and adjustment.[34] Master Tara Singh in his Presidential Address made a misplaced plea for "standing with the Congress." Precisely, he said, "I would not mind if you instead of standing with Congress, boycott it and stand in front of it in the fight for freedom. But if you boycott the Congress and stand in the back lines, it will be a matter of shame for our community. Those who are for boycotting the Congress must devise some positive fighting programme, and I am sure all the people here will be with them. . . If we go on working with the Congress as before, our attitude may be misunderstood and we may not be considered earnest in our demands. This is also dangerous and we have to chalk out a via media. It is not

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difficult to chart a safe course if you gentlemen consider unity to be the chief need of the time."[35]

Tara Singh was for fighting against the British imperialism and offering support to the Congress without a realistic appraisal either of the political forces at work including duplicity of the Congress leadership or the political and social interests of the Sikhs. He was opposed by Amar Singh of Sher-e-Punjab who wanted boycott of the Congress unless it offered satisfaction on issues agitating the Sikhs.

The session had to be adjourned sine die amidst rowdy scenes. Baba Kharak Singh summed up "the voice of the Sikhs" for boycott of the forthcoming Congress session.[36] He, as President of the SGPC, however, gave permission to Tara Singh, his vice President, to attend the Congress session in his personal capacity, and not as a representative of the Sikh community.

Now that the offer of accepting the Dominion Status was lapsing by end of the year, and the Congress was moving towards adopting a resolution asking for '*Purna Swaraj*' or Complete Independence - which however was betrayed in 1947 - the Congress leaders made empty gestures to win over the Sikhs. An informal conference was held on December 27, 1929, on the eve of the Congress session by the Sikh leaders, Kharak Singh, Mehtab Singh, Tara Singh and Amar Singh with Gandhi, M. L. Nehru, Dr. M. A. Ansari, Dr. Satya Pal and Sardul Singh Caveeshar. Gandhi brought to the notice of the Sikh leaders the Congress Working Committees's resolution withdrawing the offer of Dominion Status. With that, he contended, the Nehru Committee Report would automatically lapse and no review was called for.[37]

The Sikhs were made to believe that the Congress session would adopt a resolution extending them an assurance that in future no constitution would be acceptable to the Congress that was not acceptable to them. This resulted in the adoption of a Resolution at the Lahore Session which said that "this Congress assures the Sikhs, the Muslims and other minorities, that no solution thereof (of the communal question) in any future Constitution will be acceptable to the Congress that does not give full satisfaction to the parties concerned."

This omnibus type resolution was not worth the paper written on. The specific assurances extended to the Sikh leaders verbally were not translated into writing. Gandhi conceded, "It was adopted for the sake of Sikhs", but rationalised the omnibus type resolution with a view to "placate all communities" and avoid "coercion of minorities".[38]

Sikh leaders like Master Tara Singh who lacked legal training or an analytical mind, were taken in. Precisely, Tara Singh stated, "Congress leaders have risen to the occasion and acted like statesmen. Mahatma Gandhi is to be congratulated, for it is he, who is mainly responsible for this resolution. I am sure that the Congress will gather great strength and a wave of enthusiasm will sweep the Sikhs."[39] Jawaharlal Nehru, two decades later, attributed the beginning of "extreme poverty of Sikh leadership in thought and action" to this period when they, led by Tara Singh, started blindly trusting the Congress leaders.[39a] Tara Singh rued in post independence period his woolly impressions of Gandhi and his cohorts, gained during the freedom struggle.

As against that, the All India Sikh Conference, held simultaneously with the Congress session at Lahore, with Baba Kharak Singh as President, authorised Kharak Singh to constitute a committee of not more than seven to continue negotiations with the Congress and offer it cooperation, if satisfied.

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Kharak Singh was not in favour of offering cooperation to the Congress in its programme of Civil Disobedience Movement unless the Sikhs were given ironclad guarantees. He had another specific grievance over non-inclusion of Sikh colour in the national flag despite Gandhi's assurance to the contrary.

The Simon Commission expressed a lot of sympathy for the Sikhs but offered them nothing concrete in the absence of a mutual agreement. The Sikh representation remained almost the same as before.

Because of the unconditional cooperation offered by Shiromani Akali Dal to the Congress, which has aptly been termed as 'blind',[40] under the leadership of Master Tara Singh, the Sikhs participated in strength on the independence day celebrations on January 26, 1930, and later in the Civil Disobedience Movement. Tara Singh was taken on the 'War Council' setup for the purpose by the Punjab Provincial Congress Committee. As against that, Baba Kharak Singh refused to serve on the Council unless the Sikh colour was included in the national flag.[41] The Akalis offered 5,000 volunteers who were to join the struggle under their own flag.

After the arrest of Dr. Kitchlu, Master Tara Singh emerged as the 'Dictator' to lead the Civil Disobedience Movement. However, following the Akali volunteers proceeding to Peshawar to help the Pathan followers of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, who had been fired upon in Kissa Khwani Bazar, Tara Singh was arrested in Lahore and incarcerated in Gujrat jail. While still in jail, he later replaced Kharak Singh as President of the SGPC and was congratulated profusely by Congress leaders despite his mixing religion with politics. Tara Singh, however, compromised the Presidentship of the SGPC by continuing as an AICC Member. The Akali volunteers were not permitted to proceed beyond Dina in Jhelum, where they were lathi charged till every one of them became unconscious.[42]

The incident of firing on Gurdwara Sis Ganj, Delhi, on May 6, 1930, by the police in retaliation to Congress workers entering the Gurdwara and throwing brickbats on the police, when bullets hit *Guru Granth Sahib,* caused widespread resentment among the Sikhs. According to Montmorency, Punjab Governor, this brought a lot of extremist Sikhs into the movement. The SGPC launched a campaign for boycott and picketing of foreign cloth shops in protest against this firing. Though Kharak Singh sought to maintain a distinct identity of the Sis Ganj agitation, it certainly gave strength to the Civil Disobedience Movement.[43]

The Sikh contribution to Civil Disobedience Movement was the largest proportionately, as testified by Duni Chand, a Congress leader from the Punjab. According to Tara Singh, out of 7,000 volutneers-convicted in Punjab, 3,000 were Sikhs. But this was not sufficient to placate the Congress warlords to shed their policy of duplicity towards them.

Baba Kharak Singh was brought on a stretcher to the SGPC meeting on August 31, 1930. He threatened to resign unless the Shiromani Akali Dal refused to fight under the Congress flag which did not include the Sikh colour. He did not want the Sikhs to be taken for granted. The Punjab Provincial Congress Committee (PPCC) recommended incorporation of the Sikh colour in the national flag. But Jawaharlal Nehru, Congress President, was not amused and termed the PPCC decision as hasty and untimely.

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Following the Gandhi-Irwin pact and his subsequent release, Gandhi visited Gurdwara Sis Ganj, Delhi, on February 26, 1931, to offer his sympathies to the Sikhs at the firing incident of May 6 last, which he said he had studied with painful interest. Visibly moved at the narration of police highhandedness and sacrilege of the Gurdwara, Gandhi made an important announcemnt[44] which was later quoted by the militants after the Operation Bluestar as an authority to take up arms against the government.

Gandhi was not unaware of the general feeling among the Sikhs of the fraudulent nature of Congress leadership and the policies they were pursuing towards them, and said, "Trath and non-violence have no room for fraud or falshood. . . . In physical warfare even chicanery and fraud have a place but non-violence precludes the use of all other weapons except that of truth and justice." He went on to add, "I venture to suggest that the non-violence creed of the Congress is the surest guarantee of its good faith and our Sikh friends have no reason to fear betrayal at its hands. For the moment it did so, the Congress would not only seal its own doom but that of the country too. *Moreover the Sikhs are a brave people, they will know how to safeguard their right by the exercise of arms if it should ever come to that.*" Further that, "why can you have not faith? If the Congress should play false afterwards *you can well settle surely with it,* for you have the sword. . . I ask you to accept my word. . . let God be witness of the bond that binds me and the Congress with you."

So, here was Gandhi delivering a pledge on solemn oath in the name of Truth and God. He wrote voluminously about Truth, "but after reading all that no one could discover what exactly he meant by Truth."[45] And about God, Gandhi was no doubt a religious man so was Aurangzeb. Gandhi did not tell the Sikhs at the time that when they seek "to safeguard their right by the exercise of arms", they shall be facing the armed might of the state, and in Jawaharlal Nehru's words "superior arms will prevail",[46] to save it from the 'doom' of which he spoke. Anyhow, the deemed apostle of nonviolence, Gandhi's authorisation to Sikhs to resort to arms to safeguard their interests was of dubious character.

At Gurdwara Sis Ganj, Gandhi also said that "the flag controversy is being conducted mostly by those who had held aloof from the national movement." He wanted the Sikhs to have faith in the Congress.[47]

The Congress flag as originally designed had white, green and red colours with spinning wheel, from top to bottom, representing Christianity, Islam and Hinduism. When the Sikhs asked for inclusion of *kesari* as their colour, Gandhi "tried to pacify them with false promises and lame excuses."[48] He first said that the matter would be considered by the All India Congress Committee which now, because of CD Movement was unable to meet. Later, on April 8, 1931, he stated that the national flag, his personal creation, had been before the country for ten years, and "a lot of sentiment has gathered around it". He was aware that Sikhs were dissatisfied, and it was only to please them that he had agreed to have a committee about the flag.[49]

The Congress in August 1931 changed the national flag despite Gandhi's sentiments, to consist of three colours, horizontally arranged as before, with saffron, white and green colours from top to bottom with the spinning wheel in dark blue in the centre of white band, "it being understood that colours have no communal significance", but that "saffron represents courage and sacrifice, white peace and truth, and green shall represent faith and chivalry and the spinning wheel the hope of masses."[50] Jawaharlal Nehru in a letter to Maulana Azad gave a different interpretation with saffron representing Hindus, white Christians and green Islam, and he wanted him to convey

the same to his Muslim friends.

Gandhi did not deliberately spell out his real objection to the inclusion of a Sikh colour in the national flag as he did not consider Sikhism to be a separate religion, distinct from Hinduism. However, Congress during the flag controversy perfected the strategy of putting off the inconvenient matters about the Sikhs by constitution of committees, commissions, etc. Baba Kharak Singh was not satisfied with Gandhian chicanery and kept aloof from the Congress movement, paving the way for the ascendancy of Master Tara Singh in the Shiromani Akali Dal and the SGPC.

The Sikhs - both the Akali Dais and the Central Sikhs League - did not participate in the first Round Table Conference (RTC) following the Congress lead. They did not nominate any one to represent them at the second R.T.C. Master Tara Singh handed over the charter of 17 Sikh demands to M. K. Gandhi, nominated as sole representative of the Congress, and wanted him to represent the Sikhs too![51] Such was the blind faith of the Sikhs in Gandhi and the Congress! Mention may be made of one of the demands for redistribution of boundaries of the Punjab transferring predominantly Muslim districts to NWFP to produce a communal balance, so that no one community was in a position to dominate. Ujjal Singh and Sampuran Singh who had attended the first and second RTCs were sponsored by the government.

One of Gandhi' s pronouncements at the second RTC should have received due attention of the Sikh leaders, but it did not. Speaking on the proposal to grant separate electorate to Depressed Classes, or Untouchables, which had come up in the form of a Minorities Pact put forth by the Muslims, Indian Christians, Anglo-Indians and the untouchables to the British Prime Minister, Gandhi, who was also entrusted by the Sikhs to represent them, said, "We do not want on our register and on our census untouchables classified as a separate class. Sikhs may remain as such in perpetuity, so may Mohamedans, so may Europeans. . . *I don't mind untouchables if they so desire, being converted to Islam or Christianity.* I should tolerate that, but I cannot possibly tolerate what is in store for Hinduism if there are two divisions set forth in villages."[52]

Gandhi deliberately and mischievously excluded the option of conversion of Depressed Classes to Sikhism, which was within the framework of the Indian culture, as against Islam and Christianity representing Semitic cultures. The Sikh leaders back home did not read, much less analyse, what Gandhi said at the RTC.

Following the failure of the second RTC, British Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald issued on August 16, 1932, the Communal Award. It came as a rude shock to the Sikhs as also to Gandhi, on different counts. The Sikh disaffection arose out of the statutory majority of over 51 per cent given to the Muslims in the Punjab, whereas the Sikh representation, as hitherto, was around 19 per cent.

This led to a furore among the Sikhs against the Communal Award which was bracketed with the Nehru Committee and the Simon Commission Reports. It was decried both in the press and from platform. The establishment of a new Khalsa Darbar representing all sections of the Sikhs, and raising of 100,000 strong Akali Shahidi Dal to conduct the agitation, were steps in the right direction. It emphasised upon them the necessity to find a common umbrella organisation with common minimum programme to protect the Sikh interests. But the leadership failed to rise to the occasion. It only caused both Ujjal Singh and Sampuran Singh to resign from the RTC. The Hindus, only to confront the Muslims and reduce them to a minority in Punjab, sought the Sikh

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support. Otherwise, they had little sympathy for the Sikh cause. Gandhi and Congress did not utter a word at the Sikh predicament.

At the All Party Unity Conference at Allahabad on November 3, 1932, the Sikhs agreed to accept the statutory Muslim majority in the Punjab with a joint electorate. In return, the Sikhs were promised a seat in the provincial cabinet and 4.5 percent seats in, the central legislature. The deliberations of the Unity Conference were torpedoed by the declaration of Sir Samuel Hoare, Secretary of State, on December 24, 1932, granting Muslims 33.5 percent representation in the central legislature. He also agreed in principle to the separation of Sind from Bombay Presidency. Since no Sikh was willing to attend the third RTC, the Government sponsored Tara Singh of Moga, a former member of Punjab Assembly, to represent the Sikhs. No changes, however, were made in the Award. The Sikhs were left high and dry both by the British government as also the Congress in which they had reposed their confidence. Also, it was obvious that the repeated Congress assurances to the Sikhs to duly protect their interests in any future constitutional settlement with a view to secure their participation in the Congress movement, were phoney in character.

So was also the case with Gandhi's reiteration to the Khalsa Darbar deputation which called on him at Lahore on July 15, 1934, that "no constitution would be acceptable to the Congress which did not satisfy the Sikhs. "He added, "Similarly, the Congress would not reject what the Mussalmans wanted, nor could it accept what Hindus or Sikhs reject." Gandhi also spoke of numerous complaints against the Sikhs for tempting Harijans to reject Hinduism and become Sikhs, which, he said, was reprehensible.[53]

By the time, Gandhi had emerged as the undisputed leader of the caste-Hindus, which was an indirect upshot of his fast unto death over the issue of grant of separate electorate to the backward classes under the Communal Award. This fast was unnecessary and uncalled for. A day before, on September 20, 1932, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, leader of the Depressed Classes, or Untouchables, in the backdrop of mounting caste-Hindus mobilisation at all levels - village, town, city, all over India - to subject untouchables to largescale violence and bloodshed, had been coerced to agree to joint electorate of caste Hindus and Untouchables. The only safeguard conceded was that the latter would hold primary elections selecting candidates to be put up to joint electorate. Gandhi, none the less, went on fast and in the background of threatened mass scale violence forced Dr. Ambedkar, who had earlier described his projected fast as a 'political stunt', to hold face to face talks. Ambedkar was coerced to accept the spurious solace of warding off of caste-Hindu violence against the Untouchables.[54] It rather got accentuated and is continuing till today.

The small gains made by Dr. Ambedkar in securing primary election of candidates by separate Depressed Classess electorate was lost in the process of its incorporation in the Communal Award and later translation into the Government of India Act, 1935. Ambedkar's objective was to ensure that elected Backward Class candidates voiced their true interests. This was not acceptable to Gandhi and was subverted. And, Gandhi later bluntly stated that he had never agreed to that.[55] If Gandhi or Congress did not abide by their solemn commitments under the Poona Pact arrived at with untouchables, whom Gandhi termed as integral part of Hinduism,[56] what hope could there be for minorities that Congress would honour the commitments and agreements it was making with them?

A fact which stood out clearly was that Gandhi had forged the," use of 'fast unto death' as a potent weapon of coercion, and violent one at that, in sharp contrast to his earlier doctrine of non-

violence of 1920-22 era. Gandhi, by now, assumed a new position in Hinduism, and could afford to cease to be even a primary member of the Congress to retain its leadership.

If Gandhi staked his life to prevent the assertion of their religious identity by the Depressed Classes apart from Hinduism, was he serious in permitting them the option of conversion to Islam or Christianity, the Semitic religions having a different social system? Gandhi knew that the depressed classes were so interwoven into 5 caste-Hindu socio-economic system that it would be difficult for them to accept Islam or Christianity, and not be uprooted from their social and cultural mores. By conversion to Sikhism they could remain within the broad Indian cultural framework and yet regain their dignity and self respect denied to them for centuries because of the sanctions of Hindu Shastras. At the second RTC, Gandhi had already closed that option for them.

Dr. Ambedkar also knew that the uplift of depressed classes was not possible within the framework of Hinduism. He was pondering over the offers by the Muslims and the Christians for mass conversion of 5 million untouchables when the small Sikh community of Bombay, led by Gurdit Singh Sethi, offered him conversion to Sikhism." At their instance, a delegation from the Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Nankana Sahib, and the SGPC, established contact with various sections of depressed classes. They also participated in the Untouchables Conference at Poona on January 10-11, 1936. The Nankana Sahib Committee established the Guru Nanak Prachar Trust on January 25, 1936. Considering the importance of the subject, the All Parties Sikh Conference, held under the Presidentship of Mehtab Singh on April 13, 1936, constituted an All India Sikh Mission under the presidentship of Master Tara Singh and convened the Gurmat Prachar Conference (conference for propagation of Sikh faith) which was also attended by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. He made public his intention in a round about manner to adopt Sikhism. As a result of these confabulations, the Sikhs set up a private press at Bombay for publication of Ambedkar's paper *Janta.* They also established a Khalsa College in Bombay to impart higher education to backward classes.[58]

The Hindu leaders were; not unaware of Ambedkar's confabulations with men" of various religions. The leaders of Hindu Mahasabha, Dr. B.S. Moonje and Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya were not in favour of conversion of backward classes to Islam or Christianity, as by that they would go outside the purview of Indian culture; They, However, encouraged Dr. Ambedkar to go in for Sikhism. As a result of a series of discussions between the Sikhs, Dr. Ambedkar and R.B. Rajah apart from Dr. Moonje, Savarkar, Madan Mohan Malaviya and J.K. Birla, an outline of the proposed entry of Backward Classes into Sikhism was drawn up. It was as follows: "If Dr. Ambedkar were. to announce his decision that he and his followers are prepared to embrace Sikhism in preference to Islam and Christianity, and that he shall honestly and sincerely cooperate with the Hindus and the Sikhs in propagating their culture and in counteracting the Moslem movement for drawing the depressed classed into the Moslem fold, the Hindu Mahasabha will be prepared, in view of their having agreed to remain within the Hindu(read Indian) culture, to make an announcement that it will not object:

1. To the conversion of the Depressed Classes to Sikhism;
2. To the inclusion of the neo-Sikhs in the list of the Scheduled Castes; and
3. To the enjoyment by the depressed classes of the political rights of the Poona Pact by free competition between the Sikh and the neo-Sikh depressed classes as provided for under the Poona Pact.[59]

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The time and venue of the proposed ceremony were to be announced shortly. Jugal Kishore Birla donated a sum of Rs. 25,000 to the Sikhs for the purpose.

The proposal was brought to the notice of Gandhi in strict confidence. He was so upset that he was besides himself. He wrote to Dr. Moonje on July 31, that his proposal was subversive of the spirit of Yervada (Poona) Pact and wholly contrary to the untouchability movement.[60] He wrote a long write-up in the *Harijan* on August 22, 1936, under the title 'A Dangerous Proposal', and brought into recirculation the term Harijan, children of God, for depressed classes; he said, he could not contemplate of their going out of the Hindu fold.[61]

In a letter dated September 7, 1936, to Jugal Kishore Birla, Gandhi wrote: "Today I will only say that to me Sikhism is a part of Hinduism. But the situation is different from the legal point of view. Dr. Ambedkar wants a change of religion. If becoming a Sikh amounts to conversion, then this kind of conversion on the part of Harijans is dangerous. If you can persuade the Sikhs to accept that Sikhism is a part of Hinduism and if you can make them give up the separate electorate, then I will have no objection to Harijans calling themselves Ramanujis or Sikhs."[62]

Reverting to the same subject m the *Harijan* of September 19, 1936, he wrote, that "Dr. Ambedkar does not regard Sikhs as Hindus. He definitely wants a change of faith". If Sikhs were Hindus that won't matter. But "since Sikhs consider themselves to be a separate religion and have separate electorate, no one could be a party to the proposal put forth by Dr. Ambedkar and Moonje."[63]

Master Tara Singh relying on a letter written to him by Gandhi a decade and a half earlier that, "I am Indian; I do not talk of this or that community", sent Master Sujan Singh, General Secretary of All India Sikh Mission to Gandhi. Knowing the purport of the visit, Gandhi took out his watch and said he would give Sujan Singh five minutes. What passed between them, in the words of Sujan Singh, was as follows:

SS: Do you have any objection to the untouchables becoming Sikhs.
MKG: Are the Sikhs Hindus?
SS: No.
MKG: If the Sikhs are not Hindus, then what is the difference between a Muslim and a Sikh? When the untouchables are not to remain Hindus, why should they become Sikhs? Why should not they become Muslims?

Master Sujan Singh then referred to Gandhi's letter to Tara Singh and said, "You call yourself an Indian, why do you see a difference between Hindus and Sikhs? One may be a Sikh, a Hindu, or a Muslim, what is that to you? He will still remain an Indian. Whether Dr. Ambedkar becomes a Sikh or a Muslim what difference does that make to you?"

MKG: (a bit irritated) Sardar Sahib, E have no more time.
SS: You are a hypocrite.[64]

Really, Gandhi had brought hypocrisy on a vast scale in public life in India, and the Sikhs were found wanting in meeting that. Already, the Sikh leadership had not analysed Gandhi's writings on the Sikhs, especially after the Nankana Sahib tragedy and the Jaito affair, nor his promotion of Hindu cause including *Shuddhi* vis a vis Muslims and his use of 'fast unto death' as a

weapon of offence.

Gandhi now went into a multipronged offensive. Firstly, he sought create disunity in the ranks of depressed classes and built up M.C. Rajah of Tamil Nadu against Dr. Ambedkar. Secondly, he wanted the "Sikhs to take to the Devnagri script in place of the Gurmukhi." He went on to add that "There is no elegance about the (Gurmukhi) script; But I understand that it was specially invented like Sindhi to isolate the Sikhs from the other Hindus."[65] What an ignoramous he was! The degree of his intolerance may be judged from the fact that he singled out Gurmukhi script, and offered no corresponding advice to Gujratis, Oriyas, Bengalis much less on languages in South India to give up their scripts in favour of Devnagri. He sanctified the denial of their mother tongue after independence by a section of Punjabi Hindus.

Lastly, he re-used the offensive weapon of 'fast unto death'- this time to have untouchables classified as Hindus, a depressed and backward section, entitled to special facilities and concessions. The fast went on for three weeks. The British, knowing the utility to them of Gandhi, yielded, and, in consonance with the formulae chalked out by Caste Hindus, issued a proclamation saying that Untouchables were Hindus and would be entitled to special concessions only if they remained within the Hindu fold and not otherwise! Rightly, his services to Hinduism with its *Varnashramdharma,* inbuilt inequalities, were great. Mayawati of Bahujan Samaj party on the basis of her reading of Ambedkar papers, was not wrong when she in 1994 termed Gandhi as a great enemy of *Dalits*. Gandhi ensured that depressed classes remain depressed for all times to come.

It has been contended by some that Dr. Ambedkar's move to adopt Sikhism was political in character. Come what may, there was no doubt that Gandhi was moved by sectarian considerations and Sikh xenophobia.

Meanwhile, before the Government of India Act, 1935, incorporating the Communal Award received Royal accent in August 1935,[66] Sikh-Muslim undercurrent of hostility found expression in the form of fracas over Shahidganj Gurdwara. Some Muslims, despite earlier Court Judgements, contended that it was a mosque and should be handed over to them. The Hindu Congress leaders saw in it the potential to keep the Sikhs off balance and adopted a neutral stance, much to the chagrin of the Sikh leadership. Master Tara Singh gave vent to his feelings of disgust when he said that the Congress would keep aloof even if Muslims attacked the Golden Temple.[67]

On the eve of January 1937 elections, the Sikhs were in a pathetic situation.

Their objective, especially since 1928, was clear: to ward off Muslim or Hindu domination. If the Muslims posed a threat to their political aspirations, the Hindus in addition threatened their cultural identity as well. It was imperative for them to assert their genuinely independent entity and be the fourth arm to turn the Hindu-Muslim-British triangle into a quadrangular relationship, and in the process bargain with the Muslims and the British to safeguard their interests. But the vocal sections of the Sikhs, led by Master Tara Singh, which in the early 1930s asserted its leadership, as far as control over the SGPC and the Shiromani Akali Dal were concerned, had been tied to the apron strings of the Congress, undermining the Sikh credibility. The Central Akali Dal of Giani Sher Singh/Baba Kharak Singh had by the 1930s no independent political programme and concentrated only on anti-Tara Singh activity.[68]

If it was the clash of personalities that tore asunder the two Akali Dais, Master Tara Singh

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had fundamental objections to cooperating with the Chief Khalsa Diwan elements whom he considered loyalists, though they had community of outlook so far as basic Sikh issues were concerned.

Tara Singh in 1936 committed a series of mistakes. The formation of Khalsa National Party (KNP) by the Chief Khalsa Diwan under the leadership of Sir Sunder Singh Majithia and Sir Jogendra Singh, and the rejection of their offer, of a Unity Board to select candidates for all Sikh seats, by the Akalis, was quite understandable in view of Tara Singh's ideological commitments. But not the decision of the Akalis to fight the elections jointly with the Congress which practically did not exist in Punjab, except for certain pockets of reactionary urban Hindus, a legacy of the days of. Lala Lajpat Rai. The initial Akali opposition to the Congress caused a split in Akali ranks with Mangal Singh resigning from the Presidentship of the Khalsa Darbar, and Harcharan Singh Bajwa from the General Secretaryship of the Khalsa Youth League.[69]

The Congress formed a separate Congress Sikh Party in August 1936 with Sarmukh Singh Jhabal as President to develop mass contacts and erode the Akali base. It was joined by the Kirtis, the former communists and Sikhs socialists.[70] Giani Sher Singh on the other hand joined hands with the Khalsa National Party.

In view of this polarisation of forces, the Akalis fell into the Congress trap and decided to cooperate wholeheartedly with them ignoring in the process Gandhi's Sikh xenophobia over backward classes joining the Sikh faith. Not only that, Shiromani Akali Dal unabashedly agreed to atomise its regional character by agreeing that Akali candidates, returned to the legislature, would form part of the Congress Legislative Party and be amenable to its discipline.[71]

The 1937 elections were contested by the Congress (12 seats), Akalis (15 seats), and socialists (one seat) combine vis a vis the Khalsa National Party (19 seats), and the Unionists (2 seats) supported by the Central Akali Dal of Sher Singh. None of the combinations contested all the seats. The Khalsa National Party won 14 seats, the Akalis 10, the Congress, the socialists (who later joined the Congress) 1 each and independents 3. The pattern of voting (KNP 29.9%, Akalis 26.16%, Congress 16%, socialists 1.46%, Unionists 2.02% and Independents garnering 21.85%) showed that Sikh voters were confused at the alignment of forces. [72]

The Akalis met in April 1937 to revitalise the party when it was decided to permit members of the Akali Working Committee to be on the Executive Committee of the SGPC. The Akalis regarded the Congress as the vanguard of freedom struggle and decided to extend it support. By June, the Akalis asked the Sikhs to join the Congress in strength.[73] This was in sharp contrast to the Muslim League resistance to the Congress attempt to muck it up in U.P. in return for seats in the provincial government. The League drew pragmatic conclusions from the episode whereas the Akalis continued to function with a single track mind.

As against the Congress attitude to the formation of government in U.P., the Unionists who won an overall majority in the Punjab legislature adopted a different attitude. They offered seats in the Cabinet to the Khalsa National Party, apart from the National Progressive Party, in a genuine coalition government. As a result, Sunder Singh Majithia of KNP and Sir Manohar Lal of NPP were taken as members of the government formed by Sir Sikander Hayat Khan on April 1, 1937.

With the conclusion of the Sikander-Jinnah Pact on October 15, 1937,[74] turning the Unionist

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Muslims into the Muslim Leaguers,[75] the Unionists committed the same blunder that the Akalis had committed earlier by making Akali legislators to accept Congress discipline. The atomisation of regional parties was almost complete in the Punjab. Sir Sikander's declaration that "adherence to the Muslim League would not effect the position and policy of the Unionist Party in Punjab" was, however, found acceptable to the Khalsa National Party.

The Unionists followed an even handed policy in communal conflict over the slaughter of Cows, *jhatka* and *halal,* and music before the mosque questions which marred the early years of Sir Sikander ministry. He rejected the outrageous Muslim claims over Shahidganj Gurdwara and dealt severely with the Khaksar Party, a para military organisation of Muslims. Sir Sikander's policy drew laurels from Sardul Singh Caveeshar who in a letter to Jawaharlal Nehru, wrote, "The Muslim majority in the Punjab is working from the point of view of communal peace very tactfully and very successfully than Congress ministries."[76]

The Akalis busied themselves with sniping at the Khalsa National Party and ignored the continuous snide remarks born out of ignorance and malice of Gandhi about the Sikhs. For instance, talking to Khudai Khidmatgars in early October 1938, Gandhi said, "Today the Sikhs say that if they give up *Kirpan,* they give up everything. They seem to have made the *Kirpan* into their religion."[77] A year later, he termed the Sikhs alongwith the Depressed Classes, the Brahmins and the Jains as social minorities, as against the Muslims and the Christians whom he termed religious minorities.[78]

The Akalis meanwhile continued to function under the umbrella of the Congress. For instance, at the All India Akali Conference held in Rawalpindi in November 1938 under the Presidentship of Baldev Singh, Akali and Congress flags flew side by side and the Sikhs were exhorted to join the Congress in strength. Baldev Singh in his Presidential address said, "Next to my duty towards God and my great Gurus, I sincerely believe that it is my duty to obey the mandate of the Congress."[79] In return, while the Congress Working Committee in December 1938 declared the Hindu Mahasabha and Muslim League as communal organisations, which the Congressites could not join, no mention was made of the Shiromani Akali Dal, though Hindu Congress leaders from the Punjab considered Akalis communal and self-centred.[80] Because of Akalis towing the Congress line blindly, they were simply treated as camp followers.

The charting out of a separate course by the Akalis from that of Congress on the declaration of war in September 1939 when the Congress committed the suicidal course of retarding the war effort was a healthy trend keeping in view the Sikh interests. But this did not mean parting of the ways so far as the Akalis were concerned. According to the *Tribune* of October 22, 1939, "they sought to choose such a path which, consistent with their self-interest, would not weaken the anti-imperialist forces and should in no way stand in the way of India's freedom." The congress leaders continued to take Akalis for granted. That was the case at the time of their talks with Jinnah in early November 1939 when the Akalis got the hint of the Congress resolve to sacrifice them in case of an overall settlement with the Muslims.[81] Whereas Gandhi in his article, "The Only Way" in the *Harijan* of November 25, 1939, denied separate Sikh identity, and declared the assurances given by the Congress to the Sikhs in 1929 as "null and void", Jawaharlal Nehru as part of doubletalk strategy on December 12, 1939, assured Master Tara Singh that Sikh interests would not be ignored.[82] The Congress was already out of power in the provinces and heading towards wilderness, Jinnah celebrated December 22, as a 'Day of Deliverance' to mark a complete break with the Congress. The memorandum submitted by the Akali Dal to the Congress enlisting the Sikh sacrifices in the

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freedom struggle in the form of participation in various movements - arrests, convictions, etc,[83] was misplaced. The conflict of interest between the Akalis and the Congress in the Punjab was getting sharper.

Certain events now forced the Shiromani Akali Dal to take decisive steps to safeguard the Sikh interests. The Muslim League in view of Congress's receding from the national politics decided to sacrifice the Muslims in minority provinces and go in for "Two Nation Theory" at Lahore Session in March 1940 seeking self determination for Muslims in the North-West and Eastern parts, which, in practical parlance, meant Pakistan. And then, under Kisan Sabha influence, a Sikh squadron in April 1940 refused to go overseas. At the same time, some Sikhs of the Third Punjab Regiment deserted, while the Sikhs of Royal Indian Arms Supply Corps refused to obey the orders of the Britishers. As a result, the British were forced to impose a temporary ban on the Sikh recruitment.[84]

This was not acceptable to any section of the Sikhs. The British too deputed Major Billy Short to Lahore to liaise with the Sikhs. It was under these circumstances that the Shiromani Akali Dal decided to set up the Khalsa Defence League of India under the leadership of the Maharaja of Patiala, with Master Tara Singh and Giani Kartar Singh as members. The Khalsa National Party, which had stood for cooperation in war efforts, right from the beginning, now refused to participate in the Khalsa Defence League of India because of the presence therein of the Shiromani Akali Dal! Such puerile politics because of clash of personalities constituted the main cause of damage to the Sikh interests. The British lifted the ban on Sikh recruitment, but the quantum of recruitment of the Sikhs following that decision was unsatisfactory.[85]

The Hindus all over India took the Muslim League's Lahore Resolution rather seriously and committed a tactical mistake by over reacting to it. So was also the case with the Sikhs.

To begin with, the Khalsa National Party at its meeting on March 29, 1940, at Lahore under Sunder Singh Majithia, saw danger in the division of India into Hindu and Muslim independent states, and said that the Sikhs would not tolerate for a single day the unadulterated communal rule of any community. As a logical sequence, it asked for restoration of Sikh sovereignty in the Punjab, which was held in trust by the British during the minority reign of Maharaja Daleep Singh.[86] The *Khalsa Sewak,* a Sikh newspaper, came out in support of a Sikh state from Jumna to Jamraud, while Dr. V.S. Bhati, a Sikh from Ludhiana, propounded a scheme of Khalistan, a buffer state between Pakistan and Hindustan consisting of Sikh districts and Sikh states under the Maharaja of Patiala. A meeting at Amritsar on May 19, 1940, set up a sub-committee to pursue the matter.[87]

Master Tara Singh, Presiding over U.P. Sikh Conference at Lucknow, on April 15, 1940, said, "While opposing the Pakistan Scheme some Sikhs have lost their heads and they are preaching the establishment of Sikh rule. This will be adding to the confusion created by the Muslim Leauge. *Swaraj* is the only solution of our country's misfortunes."[88]

There was no flagging in the Shiromani Akali Dal's commitment to anti-imperialism and it expected the Congress to understand its deviatory policy. But that was not to be.

On being informed of the Akali position on recruitment to the armed forces, Gandhi wrote a nasty letter to Tara Singh on August 16, 1940. It contained some of his preconceived notions about the Sikhs and the Akali movement. It was also influenced by Punjab Congress's solidly

supporting Subhash Chandra Bose for the Presidentship of the Congress vis a vis Pattabhi Sitaramayya, Gandhi's nominee.[89] (Gandhi considered that an affront to his leadership and did not rest till he had hounded out Subhash Chandra Bose). Precisely, Gandhi wrote to Tara Singh, "As I told you, in my opinion, you have nothing in common with the Congress nor the Congress with you. You believe in the rule of the sword, the Congress does not. . . Your civil disobedience is purely a branch of violence. I am quite clear in my mind that being in the Congress, you weaken your community, and weaken the Congress. You have to be either fully nationalist or frankly communal and therefore dependent upon the British or other foreign power."[90]

It created a storm in the Sikh press, especially his snide remarks about the sword. This provoked Gandhi to have another write up, "Sikhs and Sword," in the *Harijan,* of September 29, 1940, wherein he said that Sikhs were unsuitable to remain in the Congress. He upheld his letter of August 16, to Tara Singh and said that, "It can apply to the whole of Sikh community only if they accept Master Tara Singh as their undisputed leader." He, however, reiterated that his commitment under Lahore, 1929, resolution was a "sacred trust so far I am concerned."[91] Double talk.

Master Tara Singh resigned from the Punjab Congress Working Committee but gave out that his resignation was for personal reasons and that there was no change in Akali policy towards the Congress. He wanted the Sikhs to function from within the Congress to fight for *Swaraj* and ignore Gandhi's tantrums to which he was subjected. In the process he showed inadequate appreciation of the threat posed by Gandhi and Congress to the Sikhs.

The Congress leaders now turned against the Akalis, dubbed them communal and anti-national, and ridiculed their opposition to Pakistan and the Communal Award, in view of their advocacy of cooperation with the British in regard to war effort. The revival of the Congress Sikh League, and Mangal Singh's terming Tara Singh a 'traitor', caused the Akalis to react. Tara Singh asked the Sikhs to build their own strength, so that no one whether Congress or the government could betray them.[92] But he did not listen to Gandhi's sane advice to turn "frankly communal" to save the community from the vagaries of stormy political development that lay ahead. Many Akalis courted arrest when the Congress resorted to individual civil disobedience in 1940.[93]

Right from the adoption of Muslim League's Lahore Resolution, the Congress gave indications of effecting a compromise. Gandhi regarded Lahore Resolution suicidal for Muslims in India: it opened up for him vast potentialities to emerge as 'father' of the residual India. The statements of various Congress leaders including Gandhi, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, and Rajagopalachari's 'sporting offer' of August 23, 1940, caused the Sikhs concern at the Congress betraying them in the Punjab in return for an overall settlement.[94] Earlier, the August 1940 offer of Viceroy Linlithgow reassured the Muslim League that the transfer of power would be contingent on some mutual agreement. Neither the Congress nor the Muslim League was willing to treat Punjab, a tri-religious state, differently and cater to the Sikh interests. Besides, the Sikh uneasiness gave another opportunity to Hindus of all hues to try to take them under the protective umbrella of all-embracing Hinduism, eroding their cultural identity. The possibility of isolation from the British, the Congress, and the Muslim League stared at the Akalis.

As a result of the efforts of Major Short and Penderal Moon, Deputy Commissioner of Lahore, there was a thaw in the Akali attitude towards the Unionist Government. This was accelerated by Sir Sikander's famous hands off Punjab speech of March 11, 1941, in the Punjab Assembly virtually making a declaration of independence from Jinnah, and the void created in the

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Khalsa National Party by the death in April 1941 of Sunder Singh Majithia, which caused erosion of its influence. Giani Sher Singh, a powerful factor in the Central Akali Dal, made up with Master Tara Singh in November 1941, leaving the rump to the leadership of Kharak Singh who continued to pursue a policy of negativism. The realignment offerees made the Akalis a powerful factor in the Punjab politics.

Amidst spectacular Japanese advance on Singapore on Feb. 15, and Rangoon on March 7, 1942, which gave birth to a feeling in India of Britain's losing the war, the proposals of Sir Stafford Cripps at the end of March seeking constitutional accord and offering Dominion Status at the end of the war with the right of provinces to secede, was not taken seriously by the Congress leadership. Gandhi brazenly described them as 'a post-dated cheque on a tottering bank' and the Congress committed another 'Himalayan blunder'.

Cripps's talks with leaders of various political parties and his conceding the principles of Muslim League's Lahore Resolution came as a rude shock to the Sikhs. A Sikh delegation consisting of Baldev Singh, President, Sikh All Parties Committee, Tara Singh, Sir Jogendra Singh, Prime Minister of Patiala State, and Ujjal Singh of Khalsa National Party called on Cripps on March 27, and later on March 31, submitted a formal memorandum.[95] They, inter alia, asked for division of Punjab into two provinces with Ravi as the dividing line to safeguard their interests. They were, however, emphatic that "they would not submit to the domination of a community which was bent upon breaking the unity of India and imposing their laws and culture on other sections of the population."

Sir Stafford Cripps in his talks with the delegation on March 27, 1942, spelled out the various stages for minority protection satisfactory to the Sikhs, including "the sub-division of the Punjab into two provinces or the setting up within the province of the Punjab of a semi-autonomous district for the Sikhs on the Soviet model", or even a "Treaty which would be negotiated contemporaneously with the framing of the constitution" offering "minority protection clauses in accordance with the definition set out in the document." In the context of "non-accession by plebiscite" in the Punjab, he talked of the Sikhs playing the Congress against the Muslims League and seeking more concessions from either party including "division of the province or setting up of a semi-autonomous district." The British could be relied upon to satisfactorily "insist upon protection for the Sikh minority." Cripps also made it clear that the British could practically do nothing once the successor Dominion decides upon non-observance of its treaty obligations. Hence, the need for the Sikhs to seek iron clad guarantees.

Cripps, in short, gave ample hints, rather outlined the guidelines on which the Sikhs should seek satisfaction and pursue their future course of action. It was unfortunate that the Sikh leadership because of inherent limitations failed to comprehend, much less appreciate, the originality and positive content of Cripps propositions. What he was suggesting was for the Sikhs to conceptualise their strength and weaknesses, and lay down their objectives in the context of the impending decolonisation of the subcontinent, with the possibility of the country being divided into two dominions. On that there seemed agreement on fundamentals between the British, the Congress and the Muslim League, the three main political parties.[96] The Sikh leadership failed, and failed miserably, because of poor comprehension, which affected the quality of its political moves in the later period.

The Sikhs were quite restive at the prospect of being subjected to an unsympathetic and

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tyrannical Muslim rule in the Punjab and drew some solace from the kind words uttered in the British Parliament on April 28, by Cripps as also by Mr. Amery, Secretary of State for India. The British were concerned at the prospect of bitterness of Sikh-Muslim relations to the detriment of war efforts. They worked to bring about a Sikander-Akali rapprochement.

Baldev Singh earlier in March 1942 had formed a group in the Punjab Assembly consisting of some members of the Khalsa National Party, Independents and some Akalis. The Akalis and the Unionists were now functioning on the same wave length so far as war efforts were concerned." The community of outlook led on June 15, 1942, to Sikander-Baldev Singh pact. It was limited in character.[98] Under it Baldev Singh joined the Punjab Cabinet. Shortly afterwards. Sir Jogendra Singh was nominated as a member of the Viceroy's expanded council. This marked the beginning of the Akalis chartering an independent course.[99]

The Hindu press in Punjab, which seldom played a constructive role, went hysterical. It overlooked the Hindu Mahasabha's offering cooperation to the Muslim League in similar circumstances in Bengal and Sind. Gandhi in his usual style in the *Harijan* of July 5 and 12, 1942, termed the Sikhs as Hindus and reiterated his earlier offensive references to Guru Gobind Singh as "a misguided patriot" for advocating resort to arms in certain circumstances,[100] though in another month he agreed to connive at violence when he launched the Quit India Movement, and not to commit the same sort of mistake he made on the Chauri Chaura incident.[100a] According to Jawaharlal Nehru, apart from destruction of communications and government property, mobs killed 100 persons all over India, and 10,000 persons were killed because of police or military firing.[101] Gandhi did not bestir himself. Also, he was willing to marshall India's forces in favour of the allies if the British conceded the Congress demand for setting up a provisional government immediately.

The Quit India Movement did not much affect Punjab, thanks to the Unionists and the Akalis. Udham Singh Nagoke and Ishar Singh Majhail faction of the Akalis aligned with the Congress, with Tara Singh's blessings and offered themselves for arrest. Tara Singh did nothing to thwart the Congress plank and in the words of Sir Bertrand Glancy, Governor of Punjab, he was sailing in two boats.[102]

The thought of protecting the Sikh interests again came up in the British mind. Mr. Amery, Secretary of State, in his letter of August 20, 1942, to Viceroy linked the Sikh concern "for a degree of autonomy sufficient to protect them from Muslim domination" in the context of Pakistan scheme and sought to explore "the various possibilities they suggest in advance of any further constitutional discussions." He came to the right conclusion that "a separate Sikhdom is really unworkable without extensive transfer of population", and wanted the Reforms Department to work out contingency plans in complete secrecy.[103] Surprisingly, Jinnah too at the time spoke of the transfer of population, for the Pakistan of his concept envisioned division of the Punjab province.

The Vicerory, however, saw no circumstances in which it would be practical politics to consider any sort of 'Sikhistan' and he did not want to raise any hope in the Sikhs who, he said, were capable of wrecking any scheme that could go well with the communities. He significantly observed that, "The Hindus have made the mistake of taking Jinnah seriously about Pakistan, and as a result they have given substance to a shadow."[104]

So was the case with the Sikhs with whom it became an obsession. Tara Singh was chary of the Muslim League though there was a sharp improvement in the communal situation involving all

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the three communities since the Sikander-Baldev Singh pact. But Jinnah's visit to Punjab in October 1942 and Sir Sikander Hayat Khan's seeing eye to eye with the champion of 'Pakistan', undermined the Sikh confidence in the efficacy of Sikander-Baldev Singh pact. Tara Singh started making critical references both to Jinnah and to Sikander, while Giani Kartar Singh stated at Nankana Sahib that the "Sikhs should work for the unity of India as a whole but should aim at an appropriate partition of the Punjab. . . . One of the suggestions is that this partition should be based not on population but on landed interests, as this would lead to results more favourable to the Sikhs."[105] The Sikh leadership little realised that the unity of India was jinxed, and what they needed was to draw contingency plans to avoid domination by the Hindus and the Muslims.

Master Tara Singh wrote in his autobiography that he and Giani Kartar Singh perceived, after the failure of negotiations between Jinnah, Hindu Mahasabha and other leaders in October 1942, that the formation of Pakistan was inevitable; to safeguard the Sikh interests they in consultation with C. Rajagopalachari framed the Azad Punjab Scheme.[106] This reflected the intellectual limitations under which the Sikh leadership was functioning.

The Azad Punjab scheme pertained to redemarcation of the Punjab boundaries. As mentioned earlier, Hasrat Mohani and later Lajpat Rai in 1924, the Sikhs themselves at the RTC and in their memorandum to Cripps, had asked for the splitting up of the Punjab at Ravi into Muslim and non-Muslim units. Ajit Singh Sarhadi mentions that on May 10,1942, Hindus and some Sikhs shouted slogans of *Azad Punjab Murdabad,* Down with Azad Punjab, in Campbellpur streets,[107] while Sadhu Singh Hamdard says that the name 'Azad Punjab' was mentioned in the resolution of the All India Akali Conference at Dahala Kalan on July 24, 1942.[108] Possibly the nomenclature Azad Punjab was afloat already.

Whatever be the case, Azad Punjab envisaged separation of six northern districts of Rawalpindi division, namely, Gujrat, Shahpur, Jhalum, Rawalpindi, Campbellpur, and Mianwali and four districts of Multan Division, namely, Jhang Multan, Muzzafargarh, Dera Ghazi Khan, and the Baloch Transfrontier Territory of the Punjab - all predominantly Muslim areas. But it still left districts of Lyallpur, Sheikhupura, Gujranwala, Sailkot with a Muslim population of 60 to 70 per cent and some other parts of Central Punjab with a Muslim population of 40 to 59 percent. There was also a counter proposal of the separation of Ambala Division, making it more Muslim. If the argument was that trans-Jhelum territory and Multan Division did not form part of Punjab proper, so was the case with Ambala Division which was annexed to the Punjab in punishment for the role of its people in the revolt of 1857.

It was not a demand for Khalistan, as some writers later mischievously termed it. An exchange of population was not averred though an undisclosed blueprint provided for compensation to evacuees from one region to the other through a system of barter.[109]

It was ill conceived as a sort of holding operation against Pakistan but strangely evoked strong reactions from the Congressites, Communist Sikhs, protagonists of Akhand Hindustan and other Hindus who dubbed it as "communal, anti-Hindu, anti-national, reactionary and opportunistic."[110] Even Kharak Singh in June 1943 mischievously compared Azad Punjab to Pakistan and said, "Both are schemes for the vivisection of India and both cut at the roots of its unity and integrity".[111] So was the position of the Khalsa National Party. The concept of the Sikhs holding the balance of power was not acceptable to the Hindus and was even run down by some sections of the Sikhs.

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To safeguard interests of the Hindus and the Sikhs in North West Frontier Province (NWFP), the Akali leadership in concurrence with Vir Savarkar of the Hindu Mahasabha and other Hindu leaders permitted Ajit Singh Sarhadi to join the coalition Ministry with the Muslim League in May 1943, though Tara Singh later went back on his assent. An 11 point agreement was arrived at, and it was also agreed that the "question of Pakistan would be suspended and shelved during the tenure of the coalition ministry".[112] And, the Muslim League Chief Minister, Aurangzeb Khan stuck to it. The NWFP Assembly did not adopt Pakistan resolution, as against Sind Assembly which had two ministers of the Hindu Mahasabha as members.[113]

The objective of avoiding both Hindu and Muslim domination was quite laudable, and reflected the fears of the Sikh community of being lost in the sea of Hinduism and Islam in case of division of India on a religious basis. Like Gandhi who reflected Hindu-nationalists, the leaders of Hindu Mahasabha, with whom Akalis were aligned in opposing Pakistan, took vicarious pleasure in terming Sikhs as Hindus, and emphasised the cultural oneness of the two to the chagrin of the Akalis.

Whereas the Hindu Mahasabha in concert with like minded parties like the Akali Dal was fighting tooth and nail against the vivisection of India which the concept of Pakistan entailed, the attitude of Hindu-nationalists represented by the Congress was equivocal. And that too at the time when Jinnah's position was weak as was obvious by his inability early in 1944 to persuade Sir Khizar Hayat Khan Tiwana, who had succeeded Sir Sikander Hayat Khan on his death in December 1942, to merge the Unionist Party with the Muslim League.

For instance, the formulae of July 10, 1944, enunciated by C. Rajagopalachari, with which Gandhi was in agreement envisioned, "Muslim contiguous districts in the north-west and east of India, wherein the Muslim population is in absolute majority" holding a plebiscite after termination of war on the basis of adult suffrage to decide the formation of a sovereign state separate from Hindustan, in return for Muslim League's cooperation for the formation of a provisional interim government for the transitional period. It also envisaged transfer of population on a voluntary basis.

Gandhi had his own objectives in conceding the concept of Pakistan, while some of the Congress leaders including Nehru and Patel had become almost maniacs to form an interim government and could go to any extent including partition of the country on the basis of two nation theory to achieve that. Jinnah was quite pleased that Gandhi had accepted the principle of partition but rejected the CR formulae as offering "a shadow and a husk, a maimed, mutilated and motheaten Pakistan."[114] He made a correct reading of the Hindu mind and tried to rope in the Sikhs by offering them "some kind of special autonomy" in the Punjab.[115] The idea of partition was so outrageous to the Sikhs that they spurned it without going into its mechanics or using it as a lever to secure some corresponding gains from the Congress.

The CR formula came as a rude shock to almost all sections of the Sikh political groups and they vigorously protested against Gandhi's positive attitude to the partition of the country. The Working Committee of the All Parties Sikh Conference met at Amritsar on August 1, 1944. It held that the CR formula "was manifestly unfair and detrimental to the best interests of the country and the Sikh Community." It regarded Gandhi's approval of the same as "breach of faith" on the part of the Congress leaders and violative of assurances to the Sikhs "at its Lahore session in 1929".[116] The Working Committee also decided to approach Master Tara Singh who had retired from active

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politics to come back and lead the Sikh community in its struggle.

A broad representative gathering of the Sikhs, of various shades of opinion except the Communists, was invited to a meeting at Amritsar on August 20, 1944. The Central Akali Dal dissociated itself from the Amritsar meet, but it rejected the CR formula and said that the Sikhs would not accept India's vivisection.

The Amritsar gathering in a resolution condemned the CR formula which sought to divide the Sikhs into two halves under the domination of Hindu and Muslim majorities.[117] Giani Sher Singh made explicit that "If a common rule of all the communities was not possible in India, the Sikhs would also like to see their own flag flying somewhere in their own territory." Santokh Singh, leader of Opposition in the Punjab Assembly added that "No one, not even ten Gandhis, had a right to barter away the Sikhs" while Ujjal Singh said that the Sikhs "did not want to live in perpetual slavery". Giani Kartar Singh, the brain of the Akali Dal, stated that "The Sikhs were prepared to agree to the division only out of compulsion. If Pakistan was to come of compulsion because Mr. Jinnah's demand could not be resisted, why not give an independent State to the Sikhs also." He traced the present predicament of the Sikhs to their "always approaching Gandhi with folded hands."

Another resolution 'ordered' Master Tara Singh to come out of retirement and lead the Sikh community.

Mangal Singh M.L.A. (Central) in another resolution "wanted the creation of a position wherein the Sikhs would remain neither under the domination of the Muslim majority nor the Hindu majority." By an amendment, a demand was made for the creation of an independent Sikh state-the scheme to be worked out by a committee appointed by Master Tara Singh.

Master Tara Singh said that the Sikhs wanted to avoid perpetual slavery of Hindus or Muslims and added, "The Sikhs also wanted political power". The Sikhs "must now learn to stand on their own legs and look up to no one." He asserted that the "Sikhs were a nation, and they wanted to live in their country as honourable people and if there was to be a division they must not be made slaves of a Pakistan and Hindustan."

Brave words, but not followed by deeds.

Jinnah straightaway conceded the Sikh viewpoint. In a press conference in August 1944 he stated, "I don't dispute that the Sikhs are a nation", in sharp contrast to his earlier speech at the Lahore Chamber of Commerce in March 1944. Gandhi, however, was unmoved. From September 9, he conducted 18 days long parleys with Jinnah, leading to a deadlock. This virtually emphasised that there were two effective political parties, leaving the Sikhs in the cold. These parleys were otherwise termed as inopportune by leading Congressmen including Jawaharlal Nehru, and added to Jinnah's stature.

Now was the time for the Sikhs to formulate a clear cut strategy as both the Congress and the Muslim League were bent upon a bilateral solution to the problems facing India. The All India Akali Conference which met at Lahore on October 14-15, 1944, came as a great disappointment.[118]

It was obvious that the Sikhs could not fight on all fronts against the British, the Congress

and the Muslim League, especially when the latter two were hell bent upon ignoring them as the third factor. The issues had been formulated at the August 1944 All Parties Sikh Conference. It was affirmed that the Sikhs would not accept Hindu or Muslim domination, and would prefer a Sikh state in case of division of India on religious basis. Tara Singh was entrusted to constitute a committee to work out the proposal. It was unfortunate it never got off the ground. Also, the Sikhs made no attempt to analyse their present predicament and discard their attitude of supra-nationalism. There was need for a more pragmatic approach.

The Presidential Address of Pritam Singh Gojran on October 14, stated, "The Sikhs are opposed to the establishment of Pakistan and they cannot tolerate India's vivisection. But if India is to be divided and cut into pieces, the Sikhs must have a state and they must be given homeland on the basis of the land now in their possession and their political importance." Also, Gandhi had not kept his word given to the Sikhs in 1929, did not care for the Sikhs who, he thought, were non-existent, and wanted to sell them to Jinnah.

This was expressive of both their supra-national ism, their concern for their place in the future set up, and bewilderment at what they regarded as betrayal by Gandhi and the Congress.

Tara Singh continuing his war on all fronts said that while "The Sikhs were not prepared to suffer the British, who had denied them their freedom, they were equally unprepared to suffer the doings of tyrants like (Mahatma) Gandhi and Mr. Jinnah both of whom wanted to impose Hindu and Muslim majorities on the Sikhs by dividing India."

Then followed Giani Kartar Singh who in the words of N. N. Mitra "excelled Mr. Jinnah in his attempt to ridicule Gandhijee and throw mud on him and levelling charges on the Congress Ministers in some of the provinces and accusing them of 'injustice' done to the Sikhs. His speech looked like an impeachment of Gandhijee and he employed some of the strongest epithets to express resentment at what great sin Gandhijee had committed by what he described as going back from his word given to the Sikhs", who, he said, "have never been treated with any such disrespect and discourtesy during the past one hundred years by any political leader." He described Jinnah as the "political enemy of the Sikhs" out to ruin them, but paid him tribute for his political sagacity.[119]

The Akalis, however, did not show any sagacity in not proceeding with the resolution for an independent Sikh state the following day. That was a retrogressive move as it meant backtracking on the All Parties Sikh Conference of August last wherein the Akalis had played a predominant part. The main resolution moved by Tara Singh on October 15, 1944 stated that the demand for an independent Sikh state was not being pressed and was being held back in order to keep the door open for negotiations. Mangal Singh in support stated that the course was being followed to let the demand remain 'flexible'. The 'big guns' of the Akali party speaking on the resolution said that "The Sikhs were prepared for any kind of settlement but they would in no case tolerate division of India or the establishment of Pakistan."[120]

Tara Singh was obviously in a state of mental conflict. He described the plea of the Sikhs being smaller in number (5.7 million) as futile because an independent Ireland had been carved out, out of a smaller population of 4.3 million.[121] He asserted that no communal settlement would be acceptable to the Sikhs unless it was approved by the Shiromani Akali Dal.

The general tone of the second day was one of 'annoyance' at Gandhi's breaking of the

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promise held out to the Sikhs in 1929 as if the Akalis wanted to keep the umbilical chord that tied them to the Congress apron strings. Tara Singh must have spoken through his hat (turban at that), when he said, "If the Congress would remove Mahatma Gandhi from all his positions in the Congress for having acted against the Congress resolution, he would bear no hesitation in jumping back into the Congress fold."[122]

He also spoke of 'Aurangzebi Raj" in the Punjab in spite of Baldev Singh, an Akali Minister, being in the Punjab Cabinet; he, however, termed Khizar Hayat Khan better than Sikander Hayat Khan as Chief Minister. The tilt against Muslims vis a vis Hindus, or in other words against Muslim League clouded the Akali judgement. It also prevented them from thinking of means of saving themselves from Hindu domination in case of the formation of Pakistan.

Mention may now be made of two distracting influences. The first was that of Communists led by Baba Wasakha Singh and Baba Sohan Singh. They along with Sarmukh Singh Jhabal, a Sikh Congress leader, and other like minded groups including the Central Sikh Youth League, at a conference held at Amritsar on September 11, 1944, expressed their faith in Gandhi. Teja Singh Swatantra stated that, "Today, the League ideology has come to stay and there was hardly a Muslim who did not have faith in that."[123] The Conference welcomed Gandhi's efforts "to end the political deadlock through Congress-League unity", wanted acceptance of "the right of self determination of Sikhs and Muslims" and advocated "a Congress-League-Sikh agreement. . . to end the deadlock and advance towards National Government." It reposed full faith in Gandhi's "assurances to the Sikhs", took note of his "accepting the principle of the right of self-determination for the Muslims", and wanted him "to consult nationalist Sikh opinion before committing himself to any final settlement".[124] Their stand was critical of Tara Singh and the Shiromani Akali Dal. The Communists and their fellow travellers did not see any contradiction in their glib talk of the Sikh right of self-determination and the leadership of Gandhi or of nationalist Sikhs for that.

It resulted in Durlabh Singh, Secretary, Sikh Youth League's letter dated November 12, 1944, to Gandhi and his reply of two days later in which he said that in case of Jinnah's acceptance of the CR formula, both Jinnah and he would have gone to the Sikhs and others to secure their acceptance. Or, impose the settlement on them? He averred that "the interests of nationalist Sikhs, as also all nationalists, are safe in my hands" and also of the Congress, "though as you know I have no authority to speak on behalf of the Congress."[125] This was Gandhi's standard ploy to disclaim any responsibility for the Congress, though in actual practice his position was that of a dictator.

The other was the Nagoke-Majhail group of Akali Dal which had been permitted to participate in the Quit India Movement, and had pronounced pro-Congress proclivities, as was discernible at the Akali Jubilee Conference at Jandiala on November 25, 1944. Ishar Singh Majhail in his Presidential address said that the "Shiromani Akali Dal will continue to stand by the Congress". He termed the CR formula as a symptom of the sense of frustration in the Congress, which may accept it under Gandhi's influence. He avowed that "our ideal is a free India where the Sikhs are also free like other communities."

The wholehearted support of the Akalis to Akhand Hindustan Conference in Delhi in October 1944, despite their reservations about Savarkar's Hindudom, and equivocal memorandum presented to Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru Committee shortly afterwards, is to be seen in this light - of lack of a precise objective and absence of a consolidated leadership. The Sapru Committee had been conceived of as a Conciliation Committee to devise ways and means for an agreed constitution.

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The Sapru Committee's questionnaire helped to bring some refinement in the Akali thought process. The demand for a Sikh state with transfer and exchange of population and property was still hedged with ifs and buts relating to the partition of India, but was not put forth as an irrevocable demand. The Sikh leadership as an alternative showed its preference for the Swiss model of executive with suitable modifications - an irremovable composite executive in place of the Parliamentary system of government.[126]

It was significant that both Bhulabhai Desai-Liaquat Pact of January 11, 1945 which had the approval of Gandhi who later unceremoniously backed out,[127] and the Sapru Committee Report envisaged a coalition government at the Centre with parity of representation for the Congress and the Muslim League, apart from representation of minorities like the Sikhs and backward classes. The concept of parity in representation, etc, between the Hindus and the Muslims was devised in recognition of the fact that "the fears of the Muslim community about its future in free and united India were genuine", and it was necessary to alley them by enactment of effective constitutional provisions, to safeguard the unity of India.

Pertinently, at the Simla Conference, for the formation of coalition government at the centre and for framing a constitution, called by Lord Wavell, June 25-July 14, 1945, both the Congress and the Muslim League accepted the concept of parity in representation between the caste Hindus and the Muslims. The conference failed because of Jinnah's insistence that all Muslims should be nominees of the Muslim League. He not only denied the Congress any representation out of Muslim seats, but also the powerful Unionist party in the Punjab.

At the Simla Conference, Master Tara Singh opposed the demand for Pakistan and contended that on similar principles he would claim a Sikh state in Central Punjab, on the analogy of Palestine which had been declared a Jewish homeland even though the Jews formed only 10 percent of population.[128] Tara Singh did not realise that he could develop this idea only with British cooperation.

Wavell perceived that "Jinnah's attitude was based on a genuine fear of the Congress" while Sir Bertrand Glancy, Governor of Punjab, warned of "a very serious danger of elections being fought, so far as Muslims are concerned, on an entirely false issue." Also, "if Pakistan becomes an imminent reality, we shall be heading straight for bloodshed on a wide scale" and that "especially Sikh are not bluffing, they will not submit peacefully to a government that is labelled Muhmmadan Raj".[129] He, therefore, suggested the desirability of defusing the idea of Pakistan by projecting a division of Punjab at Amritsar/Lahore in the form of a Question-Answer in British Parliament which he thought would give credence to the Unionists.[129] The course was not followed.

From the autumn of 1944, the British had started giving Master Tara Singh, the same degree of credence in Sikh politics as they were giving to Jinnah in Muslim politics. By the beginning of 1945, the Shiromani Akali Dal had clearly emerged as the "premier organisation of the Sikhs" and "their largest party".[130] As against this, the position of Jinnah in end 1944-early 1945, with the Unionist break with the Muslim League in the Punjab, the fall of Muslim League ministries in Bengal and NWFP, and the existence of Muslim League ministries in Assam and Sind at the sufferance of Congress, was certainly weak. But Jinnah's clarity of vision and conviction of his policies together with alignment with the British stood him in good stead.

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Tara Singh at Simla asserted his independence from the Congress and was happy at the Akalis being acknowledged along with the Congress and the Muslim League as three parties for the settlement of the future constitutional setup. He, however, failed to conceptualise the emergent situation, especially when certain Congress leaders like Rajagopalachari were suggesting the convening of a homogenised constitution making body consisting of representatives of those provinces which would vote for forming an Indian Union, leaving others to join on special conditions, or form a separate union.[131] In view of the willingness of Hindu nationalists to go in for a homegenised Indian Union, it was reprehensible that the Sikhs at the All India Akali Conference at Gujranwala on September 29-30, 1945, indulged in self deception instead of facing the issues squarely.

The selection of Babu Labh Singh as new President of the Shiromani Akali Dal at this crucial hour, when India was heading towards a new political set-up, through the process of Constituent Assembly, was inept. The two day proceedings were a babble of tongues without a meaningful direction.[132] Opposition to Pakistan movement and emphasis on the Indian unity, both of which were jinxed because of a tacit agreement between the Congress and the League to work out their own destinies, constituted the main emphasis of the speakers. Nagoke-Majhail group also emphasised the desirability of standing by the Congress, though they and some others wanted the Congress to leave the Sikh seats to Panthic candidates. A Sikh Election Board under Master Tara Singh to fight the forth coming elections was set up.

Tara Singh was explicit in maintaining "the separate existence of the Sikh Panth" and rightly pointed out that the Communists, the Congress and the Muslim League "stood committed to the principle of Pakistan." The only body against Pakistan was the Hindu Mahasabha, but its opposition had no value.[133] He was for fighting the elections on the slogan *Panth Azad te Desh Azad,* freedom of the country through the freedom of Panth. Ujjal Singh spoke of the Congress betraying the Sikhs at RTC despite the 1929 resolution, and hinted at its doing so again. There were a number of speakers who spoke of the goal of united India while Giani Kartar Singh added that "the Sikhs in the Punjab should not be under the rule of any one community".[134]

The main resolution spoke of the Communists and Pakistan movement constituting a grave menace to the Sikh community, but was silent on Congress softness on Pakistan. It further stated that "the Sikhs will give their hearty and full cooperation to all elements in the country, which are prepared to *sincerely serve and promote the freedom, unity, integrity and welfare of our beloved motherland* and those who are prepared to treat us *equal partners in the government of the country and not as sub-national groups*."[135] It kept mum on the need to safe-guard against Hindu domination in case Pakistan materialised. It was resolved to fight the forthcoming elections on Panthic ticket, but the resolution went on to add that the representatives of Shiromani Akali Dal "will always stand by the Congress in all political matters and fully cooperate with the Congress in its fight for the country's freedom."[136]

It was nothing but a juvenile affair.

The Congress struck back at 14 Sikh members who in defiance of an earlier directive had attended the Akali Conference and were a party to the decision to fight elections on the Panthic ticket. Eleven of them recanted. Babu Labh Singh, Basant Singh Moga, Senior Vice President, and Waryam Singh of Rurka Kalan, Member of Punjab Congress Working Committee, were suspended.

The Nagoke-Majhail group of the Akali Dal was not in favour of breaking with the Congress

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in the forthcoming elections. The negotiations produced a limited accord on sharing equally four seats, considered stronghold of Communists; the Akalis were willing to offer 9 of the residuary seats to Congress which was not acceptable to the Congressite Sikhs.

In the January 1946 elections, the Akalis won 23 seats as compared to the Congress winning 10 Sikh seats. The Muslim League eroded the base of the Unionists, while the Congress consolidated its hold over Hindu seats. The overall party position in the 175 member Punjab Assembly was as follows: Muslim League 74, Unionists 21 (Muslims 12, Hindus 2, Harijans 3, Christian one); Congress 51 (Hindus 40 including 4 Harijans, Muslims one, Sikhs 10); Akalis 23; Anglo-Indian two; Independent Christian one; independent Labour two; and independent Harijan one.[137]

The Muslim League needed the support of 14 more members to form the government. They negotiated with the Akalis (led by Giani Kartar Singh) who were willing to join the ministry, but the demand for Pakistan proved a stumbling block. Then followed League's negotiations with the Congress and (Baldev Singh led) Akalis combined; the differences between the three parties on future constitution were kept out and parity between League (74) and Congress-Akalis (51+23), agreed to. Other conditions were also sorted out. At Jinnah's instance, League's insistence that Congress would not nominate its only Muslim member to the Cabinet proved a stumbling block. Eventually, Khizar Hayat Khan Tiwana, after a great deal of persuasion, agreed to form a coalition government consisting of Unionists (21), Congress (51), and Akalis (23) in preference to the Governor's desire to bring Muslim League into the government to soften it up. What stood out from the goings on was that the Akalis were more concerned than the Congress with the demand for Pakistan, while Muslim League insisted on its being the exclusive representative of the Muslims to the exclusion of the Congress or the Unionists.

Overall, the Muslim League had won resounding victories on Muslim seats all over India except in the NWFP where the Red Shirts-led Congress government took office. Similarly, the Congress consolidated its position on Hindu seats and emerged as an exclusive Hindu-nationalist organisation. The bipolarisation of Hindus and the Muslims or the Congress and the Muslim League all over India was complete. One fallout of the elections was the complete rout of nationalist-Muslims, who had become irrelevant and redundant. The Akalis could see that the situation was inexorably moving towards the formation of Pakistan.

The British Prime Minister Attlee's announcement of February 19, 1946, of his government's resolve to send a special mission of Cabinet Ministers, known as the Cabinet Mission, consisting of Lord Pethic Lawrence, Secretary of State for India, Sir Stafford Cripps, President of the Board of Trade, and Mr. A. V. Alexander, First Lord of Admiralty, to finally solve the question of the transfer of power in India, reactivated the Indian political scene especially since the Mission's arrival in Delhi on March 24.

The scene among the Sikhs at this crucial hour was one of confusion, and in the words of Sarhadi, "The Sikh leadership was most indecisive as to how to proceed."[138] Some wanted Tara Singh to come to an understanding with Jinnah, while others wanted the Sikhs to play a second fiddle to the Congress. The All India Sikh Students Federation led by Sarup Singh and Amar Singh Ambalvi wanted him to play an independent role. Tara Singh on April 2, 1946, did meet Jinnah who was willing to treat the Sikhs as a sub-national group but the talks were inconclusive.[139] The following day, he met Sardar Patel who wanted the Sikhs to toe the Congress line, and Congress

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agents in Sikh ranks were successful in having Harnam Singh, later Advocate General and Judge, Punjab High Court, to accompany Tara Singh in his interview with the Cabinet Mission.[140]

The Sikh position was surprisingly fluid and it was reflected in the Memorandum presented by Tara Singh to the Cabinet Mission. It, however, carried an anti-Muslim tinge as per designs of the Congress partisans.[141]

The Memorandum opposed "any partition of India as envisaged in the draft declaration" and avowed that "with the inauguration of Provincial Autonomy on the basis of Communal Award, they have been reduced to a state of complete helplessness" and it amounted to "coercion of Sikhs" under "the Muslim rule." They wanted statutory Muslim majority in the Punjab to go and demanded increased representation for the Sikhs. Alternately, they wanted that "a new province may be carved out as an additional provincial unit in the United India of the future" so as to include "all the important Sikh *Gurdwaras* and shrines" and "a substantial majority of Sikh population in the existing province of the Punjab." The Memorandum referred to the Muslim claim to be "a separate nation distinct from the Sikhs, the Hindus and others" and "entitled to Pakistan", and added that "the Sikhs have as good a claim for the establishment of a separate State" contingent on the Mission conceding Pakistan. The very next sentence added that, "The Sikhs are in favour of a single constitution-making body" but in case the mission agreed to setting up of two constitution-making bodies there should be a separate constitution-making body also for the Sikh State." By emphasising and re-emphasising their commitment to a united India and hedging their demand with so many its and buts they made a mockery of their claim for a separate Sikh state.

Master Tara Singh accompanied by Giani Kartar Singh and Harnam Singh met the British delegation on April 5, 1946, while Baldev Singh met the Mission separately the same day. Their testimony showed that they had not done their home work, were a confused lot and were working at cross purposes with one another. It also reflected lack of centralised leadership and a settled command structure.

The Cabinet Mission wanted the Sikh representatives to indicate (a) whether, if the choice were given, the Sikh Community would prefer the transfer of powers to a single body; (b) If powers were to be transferred to two bodies, which of them would the Sikhs community wish to join; and (c) If it were found to be practical and could be arranged, (and the Secretary of State had yet formed no opinion), would the Sikhs wish to have a separate autonomous State of their own.[142]

Master Tara Singh stood for a united India with some sort of a coalition government of all communities. He did not cherish Hindu or Muslim majority in case of partition, and preferred a separate independent Sikh state with the right to federate either with Hindustan or Pakistan.

Giani Kartar Singh stated that the Sikhs would feel unsafe in either united India or Pakistan and wanted a province of their own where they would be in a dominant or almost dominant position. When asked by Sir Stafford Cripps to define the area of the proposed Sikh State, Kartar Singh suggested Jullundur and Lahore Divisions together with Montgomery and Lyallpur districts of Multan division, and Ambala Division minus Gurgaon district.

Harnam Singh opposed the partition of India as a divided India would be a prey to foreign invasions. He wanted increased Sikh representation in the proposed Constitution-making body and pleaded for a separate one for the Sikhs if there were more than one Constitution-making body.

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Baldev Singh, a Minister in Punjab, who was interviewed separately was also for a united India with reduced representation for the Muslims and weightage for the Sikhs. He, however, wanted the formation of a Sikh state in case Pakistan was conceded. Sir Stafford Cripps moving his stick over the map from Panipat to Nankana Sahib including Sikh states asked him whether they should provide that to whomsoever that area goes, no constitution covering the area be framed unless that was acceptable to the Sikhs. Baldev Singh said they wanted Sikh rule upto Jhelum and would not be satisfied with that area. Giani Kartar Singh beat his forehead thrice when told of Baldev Singh's moronic reply, but the Sikh leadership did nothing to pick up the proposal.[143] In the words of Dr. Gopal Singh, "It is a pity that such an offer (the best in the circumstances which the Sikhs later took 20 years to fight for) was rejected out of hand, without even discussing its possibilities or making it a basis for further elaborations and discussions."[144]

The Cabinet Mission especially Sir Stafford Cripps, who earlier in 1942 had also thrown a lot of suggestions at them, must have been amazed at the unintelligent, rather crazy, Sikh leaders - all four of them speaking at a tangent, oblivious of the times ahead. Cripps especially was driving them towards seeking an autonomous district or a Sikh State from Panipat to about Nankana/Ravi on the Soviet model, and it was only the craziness of the Sikh leadership that they could not pick up the hints or think in those terms. Had they studied the Soviet model, they could have asked for an autonomous unit with membership of the United Nations on the pattern of three of the Soviet Republics of Latvia, Lithuania and Estoria getting it. The SGPC could have served as the fulcrum of the Sikh nation. The British, not unnaturally, ruled them out as serious partners or worthy of confidence because of their pedestrian leadership. The Intelligence Bureau in its note of June 14,1946, attributed the failure of the Sikhs to come together to perennial jealousies amongst their leaders.[145]

The same day when the Sikh leaders were fumbling before the Cabinet Mission, Jawaharlal Nehru at a press conference in Delhi, April 5, 1946, stated, "The brave Sikhs of Punjab are entitled to special consideration. I see nothing wrong, in an area and a set up in the North wherein the Sikhs can experience the glow of freedom." Nehru, a wily politician, was speaking in a certain context and did not necessarily mean what he was saying.[146] The Sikh leaders took his statement at its face value, and are ruing the day till today.

Anyhow, the Cabinet Mission proposals put forth on May 16, 1946, envisioned an Indian Federation with Foreign Affairs, Defence and Communications with provisions to raise necessary finances as Central subjects. The residual powers lay with provinces which were clubbed in three groups. Group A consisted of six Hindu majority provinces, Group B, included Punjab, NWFP, and Sind, while Group Chad Bengal and Assam. The latter two had an overall Muslim majority though Hindus were a majority in Assam, and the Congress was in power in NWFP. The Groups could frame their own constitution, and provinces could opt out of the group after a period of 10 years. It also provided for parity in the Central executive between 6 Hindu majority and 5 Muslim majority provinces, with a population of 190 and 90 million respectively, which was highly objected to by the Congress leaders.

Before the proposals were announced, the Cabinet Mission and the Viceroy called a conference starting May 5, 1946, in Simla, of Congress and League leaders, to which Master Tara Singh as representative of the Sikhs, was also invited. Maulana Azad, President of the Congress, while objecting to parity between groups in the Executive and Legislature, was in favour of doing

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"everything possible to remove fears and suspicions from the mind of every group and community."[147] As against that, on May 8, Gandhi in a letter to Cripps, objecting to the provisions of parity between 6 Hindu majority provinces with population of 190 million and 5 Muslim majority provinces of 90 million, wrote, "*This is really worse than Pakistan*." Instead, he wanted the composition of the Central Legislature and Executive on the basis of population.[148] In the words of H. M. Seervai, "The Congress opposition to parity marks a watershed in the history of the Congress and its fight for the independence of a united India."[149] Gandhi had now decided to break the unity of India, for he was not willing to allay the genuine fears of 90 mn Muslims. Seervai avers that "after the 1945-46 elections, nationalist Muslims could play no effective part in the Congress".

Even more, a staunch Muslim like Maulana Azad became the mouth- piece for doctrines which he reported as "injurious to the unity of India."[150] Moreover, "How little Azad counted in shaping Congress policy *even before he ceased to be the Congress President* (emphasis in original) is demonstrated by the interview which Azad and Nehru had with the Mission and the Viceroy."[151]

Gandhi, Nehru and Patel were now working at cross purposes with Azad who was still the President of the Congress. Gandhi also wanted to show Azad his place as a mere Muslim showboy when he wrote to him on August 16, "I did not infer from your letter that *you are writing about my Hindus. Whatever you have in your heart has not appeared in your writing. . . . whatever you want to say about the communal problem should not be said without consulting me and the Working Committee.*"[152]

Gandhi's ploy. When it suited him he would say he is nobody in the Congress. Now he claims special prerogative for "*my Hindus*".

If Gandhi for the sake of 'my Hindus' would not offer the requisite assurances to 90 mn Muslims and consider Pakistan a better proposition than treat them equally, and brusquely shut up Maulana Azad, Congress President of six years standing, what fate could await the tiny 5-6 million Sikhs whom he never considered as a separate community? The Sikh leaders oblivious of the danger threatening them proceeded ahead non-challantly. Tara Singh pointedly asked Sir Pethick Lawrence on May 25, "What is the significance of recognising the Sikhs as one of main communities" and sought certain clarifications.[153] He instead should have asserted his position, but lacked clear objectives.

The All Parties Sikh Conference - 800 representatives of Akalis, Ramgarhia Sikhs, Namdharis, Nirmal Mahamandal, Nihang Sikhs, the Chief Khalsa Diwan, the All India Sikh Youth League, the Sikh Students Federation and numerous Singh Sabhas - met at Amritsar on June 9, 1946. Tara Singh spoke with verve "to stand united in the grave hour for the Sikh Panth". The Conference instituted a Pratinidhi Panthic Board and set up a Council of Action with Colonel Niranjan Singh Gill of the Indian National Army (INA), a Trojan horse for the Congress, as dictator. Gill had been introduced by General Mohan Singh of INA, another Trojan horse. The Congress Sikhs, under a considered plan, participated in the second day's proceedings to ensure Gill's election.

The difference of approach between Gill and Tara Singh became obvious the very first day. For instance, Niranjan Singh Gill said, "We shall explore all avenues before starting any direct action. This obviously means negotiations with the Congress and I have every hope that the Congress will stand by the Sikhs." Master Tara Singh on the other hand said, "The Panthic Board will, before launching any struggle, negotiate with political parties. The Congress and the Muslim

League are the two parties concerned."[154]

Verily, India's freedom had by now become a problem between Congress and Muslim League. The Akalis had marginalised themselves through their ineptness. The Cabinet Mission Plan was a composite whole, affirming the unity of India, the dreamchild of Viceroy Wavell on the one had, and offering the Muslims ironclad safeguards, besides an option to the provinces to get out of the groups after a period of time on the other. The League by foregoing the demand for Pakistan had nothing more to yield. The Congress being the majority party was now required to show goodwill and accommodation to the Muslim League and share power with it. In the scheme of things, the formation of the interim government, framing of the constitution, and independence were to follow in that order.

Herein the Congress failed. The attitude of the Hindu Congress leaders - Banias and Brahmins the most clever sections of the Indian society - was one of imperiousness and arrogance towards the Muslims, whether of the Muslim League variety or those like Azad within the Congress. Gandhi's hands off 'my Hindus' letter to Azad, quoted above, was typical of that imperious attitude. Nehru had nothing but contempt for Jinnah and the Muslim League, which was reciprocated in equal measure.[155] His contempt for Tara Singh was slightly less than that for Jinnah. Gandhi, as stated earlier, from 1924 had lost interest in Hindu-Muslim amity; since 1937 he had been looking for divine light to provide him a direction to Hindu-Muslim unity, but either God failed him, or he failed God in refusing to listen to the light at least from Maulana Azad that came his way.[156]

The Congress right from the beginning was not interested in working the Cabinet Mission Plan in the spirit in which it was intended to be worked. The Congress opposition to parity, compulsory groupings, and a constricted Federal Government, and demand for a Dominion Cabinet yielding it the cherished objective of absolute power, struck at the roots of the plan.

The Muslim League in its resolution on June 6, 1946, accepted the Cabinet Mission Plan, and in the words of Seervai sought "to impress upon the Congress to let bygones be bygones, and show a genuine willingness to share power with Muslim community in a united India."[157] The Congress on the other hand accepted the plan on June 25, with reservations about group provisions which struck at the integrity of the Plan. Gandhi had gone to the extent of advising Bardoloi, Premier of Assam, to reject His Majesty's Government (HMG)'s interpretation to strike the plan dead. Gandhi wrote, "Assam must not lose its soul,"[158] because of its Hindu character; he did not mind all Muslim provinces losing theirs!

If Gandhi had struck the nail on the coffin of the Cabinet Mission Plan, Nehru struck the hammer rather loudly. On July 10, 1946, at a press conference in Bombay, shortly after taking over as President of the Congress, he stated that the Congress would enter the Constituent Assembly "completely unfettered by agreements and free to meet all situations as they arose." He elaborated that "the Congress had agreed only to participate in the Constituent Assembly and regarded itself free to change or modify the Cabinet Mission Plan." Patel, the following day, attributed Nehru's outburst to "emotional insanity." The damage could not be undone. Jinnah held that Nehru represented the real mind of the Congress, and K. M. Munshi concedes that that was that "in our hearts" but Nehru gave a handle to Jinnah.[159]

Jinnah rightly argued that if the Hindus could change their position many times when the British were still there and power had not yet come into their hands, what assurances could the

minorities have, once the British left. The Muslim League adopted a resolution on July 27, 1946, revoking its acceptance of the Cabinet Mission Plan, and also drew up a plan for direct action. After adopting the resolution, Jinnah said, "This day we bid good bye to constitutional methods". Referring to the other two parties, the British and the Congress holding pistols of authority and mass struggle respectively, he said, "Today, we have also forged a pistol and are in a position to use it." August 16, was fixed as "Direct Action Day". Nobody had any idea as to what the League really meant.

Wavell sought to salvage the unity of India by asking Nehru two days later to give assurances to Jinnah on Groups, but nothing came out of the move as Nehru was only giving expression to guidelines laid by Gandhi.

At the time when the Muslim League was forging a pistol to safeguard the Muslim position in response to Congress chicanery to achieve Hindu supremacy, the Sikhs were being betrayed down the lane.

The Panthic Board presided over by Niranjan Singh Gill at its meeting on June 22, 1946, directed Baldev Singh not to accept the invitation from the Viceroy to join the interim government that was being set up pursuant to the Cabinet Mission Plan. Niranjan Singh Gill immediately started undermining the Sikh position. He worked upon Congress oriented Akalis led by Nagoke-Majhail and raked up old rivalries between the two groups to weaken the Akalis. On July 18, 1946, Gil] wrote to Nehru of his intentions, 1. To help Congress Sikhs openly against the Akalis. This would be correct in every way but there were no prospects of success over the main body of the Sikhs in the near future; and, 2. To unite the Sikhs and bring them all to the nationalist platform.[160]

Gill played the role of Judas. He operated through Nagoke to weaken the Akali resolve not to participate in the Constituent Assembly and interim government. In the words of Christine Effenbarg, Gill's position was that of a "political broker and for his services he was amply rewarded by Nehru in the post independence period with Ambassadorial appointments."[161]

Nehru's statement that the "Congress would enter the Constituent Assembly undeterred by agreements" which came an eye opener to Muslim League, was *mutatis mutandis* applicable to the Sikhs in the context of past Congress resolutions or those that may be adopted in the near future. But the Sikh leadership- did not have an analytical mind like that of Jinnah, and Gill further compromised the Sikh position by saying that "The Sikhs consider the Congress as their representative in all national matters and in the fight for freedom of India."[162] Instead, adoption of a mere resolution by the Congress Working Committee on August 8, after the Muslim League had reneged its acceptance of the Cabinet Mission Plan, appealing to the Sikhs to reconsider their decision to boycott the Constituent Assembly, without offering them any meaningful assurances, was considered sufficient by the Panthic Board on August 14, to cast their lot with the Congress and "give the Constituent Assembly a fair trial".[163]

The Direct Action Day on August 16, led to a communal holocaust in Calcutta, when Muslim mobs went berserk. The following day, Hindu mobs led by Sikh taxi drivers of Calcutta turned the tables and drew even. The great Calcutta killing - 5,000 dead, 15,000 injured and about 100,000 homeless - added a new dimension to the ongoing political dialogue, and in Clausewitzian terminology was continuation of politics by other means. The involvement of Sikh Taxi Drivers on the side of the Hindus in the Hindu-Muslim rioting reflected lack of leadership and tended to

establish an unnecessary linkage which clouded the real issue so far as the Sikhs were concerned. The failure of the Sikh leadership to dissociate the Sikhs from Hindu-Muslim conflict was reprehensible.

Wavell could foresee that if political agreement between the Congress and the Muslim League could not be arrived at, the Calcutta pattern of killings would be repeated all over India with slight variations.[164] But Gandhi, for reasons to which we shall revert later, was enthused at the developments. In a meeting with the Viceroy on August 27, "Gandhi" in the words of Wavell, "*thumped the table and said If India wants a bloodbath, she shall have it*", and that "*If a bloodbath was necessary, it would come about in spite of non-violence.*"[165] Wavell was dumb-founded at these words coming from the mouth of the 'apostle' of non-violence. Gandhi had by now graduated to fullfledged violence and bloodbath at that, all over India, though being a hypocrite he continued to wear sheep's clothing. Gandhi now looked to a bloodbath as a surgical operation to emerge as the father of the nation - whatever that meant -an ambition he had nurtured now for over two decades.

After initial wranglings, because of Nehru's designs to seize absolute power shorn of the Viceroy's veto, an interim government was formed on September 2, 1946, and included Baldev Singh as the Sikh representative, and Swaran Singh replaced him in the Punjab. Earlier in 1942, Baldev Singh had attached increasing importance to his appointment as Minister in the Sikander government, and now he regarded this appointment in the interim government as the ultimate, and an end in itself. Baldev Singh, thereafter, never looked back till his ouster in 1952 when he was seized with a feeling of remorse at the betrayal of the Sikh cause. He had a mind to pen down his memoirs spelling out the acts of treachery performed by various actors including himself, but died before he could do so.

The Sikhs were atrophied, but Jinnah could foresee the harm that could be caused by leaving the central administration to the Congress. To wreck the interim government from within, the Muslim League joined it on October 26. Liaquat Ali Khan as Finance Member tightened financial control over the entire machinery of the government of India, bringing to a standstill the functioning of Congress Ministers. Patel was so frustrated at Liaquat's financial control that he was the first among the Congress stalwarts, if you leave Gandhi aside, to be converted to the idea of partition in October itself.

The convening on November 20, 1946, of the Constituent Assembly from December 9, at the instance of His Majesty's Government over-ruling Wavell who had made it contingent on a categorical acceptance of the Cabinet Mission Plan by the Congress, was termed by Jinnah as "one more blunder of very grave and serious character." It was obvious that the Congress was not committed to the Cabinet Mission's long term Plan which in the words of Liaquat Ali Khan meant that "the Muslims had been thrown to the wolves."[166]

Seeing through the Congress strategy, as if through a prism, Wavell wrote, "*Their aim is power* and to get rid of British influence as soon as possible after which they think *they can deal with both Muslims and Princes; the former by bribery, blackmail, propaganda, and if necessary force;* the latter by stirring up their people with them, unless they do something quite outrageous. *The aim is power amongst themselves as well as the other methods above*". Further that, "The Congress will not seriously negotiate with the Muslim League as long as they can get what they want by pressure on HMG."[167]

In a last bid to preserve the unity of India, Attlee invited two representatives each of the

Congress and the Muslim League and one of the Sikhs to London. As a result, Jawaharlal Nehru representing the Congress, Jinnah and Liaquat representing the Muslim League, and Baldev Singh representing the Sikhs met in London, December 3-6, 1946, when the British made earnest attempts to bridge the gap between the Congress and the League on the Statement of May 16, i.e. Cabinet Mission Plan. The attempt failed.

Nonetheless, Attlee on December 6, read out the Statement which in the words of Seervai was "the last effective attempt to bring the Congress and the League together in framing a Constitution of a United India."[168]

From Nehru's intransigence, it was obvious that the Congress and the League were on the parting of ways, and Wavell's dream of a united India would flounder. By the time, as we shall see, we Congress had decided to split India in case the Muslims still refused to be deceived into submission. Baldev Singh met Jinnah a couple of times, but with a closed mind. Churchill had a message conveyed in confidence to Baldev Singh to stay behind for a couple of days "so as to enable the Sikhs", in the words of Kapur Singh, "to have political feet on their own on which they may walk into the current of World History."[169] According to George Abell, the British idea was to see how the Sikhs could be fitted in either of the two dominions with due safeguards,[170] an idea spelled out by Cripps to Baldev Singh in the form of a question on April 5, last.

Private Papers of Lord Wavell refer to a British plan to have three way partition of the Punjab - between Muslims and non-Muslims, and between Hindu and non-Hindu areas to cater to the Sikh interests in central Punjab including the Sikh states. Baldev Singh who was not worth his salt disclosed the message to Nehru who drafted a statement that the Sikhs had thrown their lot with the Congress and did not want anything from the British, and got it issued on behalf of Baldev Singh. He also assured Baldev Singh's accompanying him back to India. The way Baldev Singh behaved as a camp follower of Nehru caused deep resentment among the Sikhs.

Attlee told his Cabinet colleagues on December 10, that "Nehru's present policy seemed to be to secure complete domination by Congress throughout the Government of India;. . . and that the ultimate result of Congress policy might be the establishment of that Pakistan which they so much dislike. (Attlee) warned the Cabinet that the situation might so develop as to result in civil war in India with all the bloodshed that would entail. There seemed little realisation in Indian leaders of the risk that ordered government might collapse."[171]

A day earlier, the Constituent Assembly was inaugurated without participation of the Muslim League. This widened the schism. Moving the Objectives Resolution, Jawaharlal Nehru paid tributes to Gandhi and termed him "*The Father of our Nation*" (emphasis added). The cat was now out of the bag. Father of 'our nation' implied father of *their* nation, or fathers of their nations. Was Nehru conceding the two nation theory? What did he mean by the word nation? In his *Discovery of India* published in 1946, Nehru had mentioned of "the old patriarch of the Congress, Dadabhai Naoroji. . . as the Father of the country." Now in the fall of 1946, he put forth "the father of our Nation." Obviously, the country and nation were not conterminous. The country, India, was being divided into two states, but that was in the womb of the future. Partition could still be averted by effecting a compromise, or one or the other party yielding. Nonetheless, it reflected that the Congress had tentatively decided to break the Indian unity.

If it is acknowledged that in the back of Nehru's mind was his conceding the two nation

theory, would it be preposterous to project Gandhi as father of the Hindu nation?

Historically speaking, the word Hindu did not exist till the eighth century. It was only with the oncoming of Arabs that the terminology was coined and later found broad acceptance with chronologers who followed in the trail of Mahmud of Ghazni. Though Jawaharlal Nehru traced the cohesion of Hindu society to Adi Shankaracharya's extermination of Buddhism,[172] the process could not have gone much ahead.

The origin of a cohesive Hindu social order can be traced to only 19th century. Till then, Hindus had no concept like *Ummah* in Islam, community in Christianity, or panth in Sikhism. To begin with, it was articulated by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and Swami Vivekananda, and the threads were picked up by Gandhi, inheritor of both streams of thought.[173] Gandhi repeatedly laid emphasis on the need for a cohesive Hindu social order and community comparable to corresponding concepts in other social systems. He went on fast unto death at first to prevent the Depressed Classes from asserting separate social identity and remain within the Hindu *varnashram dharma,* and again to have them classified as Hindus, though his life was not at stake. Nonetheless, he did a signal service for consolidation of the Hindu society. One can legitimately term Gandhi as builder of modern Hinduism with inbuilt inequalities and oppression of the depressed classes.

Would not that entitle him to be termed father of 'our', meaning Brahminical-Hindu nation? Nehru's 'our nation' and earlier Gandhi's use of 'my Hindus' seem analogous. There was no need to consult the Sikhs, another party to join the Constituent Assembly, for Gandhi, and following him the Congress, never recognised Sikhism to be a religion distinct from Hinduism.

May be, Nehru did not have Gandhi's contributions to modern Hinduism in mind. The only rational answer available then would be that by nation, Nehru meant the Congress party, and he equated Congress with the nation: Gandhi, no doubt, was the father figure in the Congress; since 1923 he was signing 'Bapu' to his colleagues and co-workers in the Congress, of which he later emerged as the dictator or the supreme authority. Later, on April 1, 1947, at the Asian Relations Conference at Delhi when Sarojini Naidu mentioned of Gandhi as father of the nation, Shankar brought out a telling cartoon summing up the peoples mood to what later became a cliche. It showed Gandhi as the father and his son Devdas, then Managing Editor of *Hindustan Times,* as 'the nation'.

It is certain that, but for the partition of India, Gandhi could never have become father of 'our' nation, and the deliberate use of the terminology by Nehru signified the Congress resolve to go ahead with the partition, if Muslim League could not be contained to accept Hindu supremacy. And, Gandhi on attaining his life's ambition, of being acclaimed father of 'our' nation, wanted the Constituent Assembly on December 15, 1946, to go ahead with framing the constitution, with others framing their own constitution.[174]

Speaking on the objective resolution, Nehru stated "Adequate safeguards would be provided for minorities. It was a deliberation, a pledge and an undertaking before the world, a contract with millions of India, and therefore in the nature of an oath, which we must keep." These words were directed especially to the Muslims, and not to the Sikhs; hence not kept in view of what Nehru later said the change in circumstances.

The Congress on January 6,1947, non-challantly accepted HMGs statement of December 6,

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hedged with conditions (also about position of the Sikhs), which Jinnah treated as repudiation of the Cabinet Mission Plan. It was also not acceptable to HMG. The resolution came as a rude shock to the Sikhs. Tara Singh and Giani Kartar Singh regarded it as a betrayal of the Sikhs, while Mangal Singh, close to Gandhi and the Congress, stated that the worst fears of the Sikhs that their interests would be sacrificed by the Congress had come true. He called for partition of Punjab into two parts with Ravi as the dividing line.[175]

India was now fast hurtling towards chaos, anarchy and partition. The great Calcutta killing was followed by communal carnage in Bihar, Bombay and Noakhali. The sins of the Sikh Taxi Drivers of Calcutta were visited upon their coreligionists in *Hazard* in NWFP in December 1946. By beginning of 1947, the atmosphere was surcharged with fear, and emotive violence all around. Lord Wavell who did his utmost to keep India united was being sacked, thanks to machinations of the Hindu-Congress leaders. And, Attlee on February 20, 1947, issued HMGs Policy Statement of demitting power in India not later than June 1948, to a duly representative body constituted by a fully representative Constituent Assembly in accordance with the Cabinet Mission Plan, or HMG would consider to whom powers of the Central Government in British India should be handed over.

Wavell was still for making another attempt at saving the unity of India. Of the Congress leaders, Gandhi was the only one to foresee that this meant partition. Shiromani Akali Dal on February 21, talked of formation of a Hindu-Sikh province while Tara Singh told *New York Times* correspondent of his fear of "civil war" and said, "We cannot trust the Muslims under any circumstances."[176]

Tara Singh had obviously become panicky and was exploited by Hindu Congress leaders to their advantage. Tara Singh's overreaction and Akali Dal's talk of Hindu-Sikh province meant that they had lost sight of the objective of avoiding Hindu domination.

It was now important for Jinnah that he should consolidate his position in a province like the Punjab where the League was not in power. The first victim of Attlee's statement was the Ministry in Punjab headed by Khizar Hayat Khan. He resigned on March 2, 1947, in view of the entirely new situation created by Attlee's statement of February 20. He also said that he fully supported the Muslim demand for self-determination.[177]

There have been fanciful but false stories of Master Tara Singh's flourishing his sword and raising *Pakistan-murdabad,* Down with Pakistan, slogans on steps of the Punjab Assembly, of even cutting Muslim League flag on the Punjab Assembly, as signal for the communal rioting that started in the Punjab in the first week of March 1947. Nawab of Mamdot, leader of League, had been called by the Governor, and a meeting of the Congress and the Panthic Party was called in Punjab Assembly to take stock of the situation. The offer of the League for formation of an all parties government was considered. Lot of sloganeering was going on outside the Assembly by Muslim Leaguers. Tara Singh, in the words of (later Justice) G. D. Khosla stood on the stairs facing the hostile crowd and said *cut ke denge apni jan. magar nahin denge Pakistan*," We shall give away our lives, but never concede Pakistan."[178] These were not provocative, but highly irresponsible.

Rioting followed on March 4, in Lahore and Amritsar with heavy causalities. During the next week or so, savage communal riots with rape, rapine, murder and arson took place in central and western Punjab. Several towns were under curfew. All over the Punjab, people were uprooted from their homes. The Sikhs, who were thinly spread all over, were special target of the Muslim

mobs.

The Congress Working Committee on March 8, 1947, asked for partition of the Punjab on Muslim and non-Muslim basis. The *Dawn,* the mouthpiece of Muslim League, justifiably asked, "Why then not cut the gordian knot and divide the whole country."[179] Feroze Khan Noon, a member of the Muslim League High Command said that the Muslims would be agreeable to satisfy the legitimate Sikh aspirations. Tara Singh two days later spurned suggestions of Muslim League-Sikh understanding as an attempt to create a cleavage between the Hindus and Sikhs, and asserted "We are not going to betray the Hindus". He ended up this phase of his life by betraying the Sikhs to Hindu entanglement because of sheer ineptness. Earlier, the Hindus of Punjab in a clever move hailed him as their leader. That went into his head and affected rational thinking. Muslim atrocities on the Sikhs in Rawalpindi Division, Hazara and other area constituted another factor.

It will be seen that by the time, March 23, 1947, Lord Louis Mountbatten took over as Viceroy of India, the decision to partition India had already been taken. Mountbatten known for his megalomania, forced the pace of events and aggravated the problem. He did not permit a rapprochement that was on the cards on a reappraisal by Gandhi and Nehru. In Nehru and Patel, he found power maniacs who fell a prey to his evils. Nehru also shared with Mountbatten in vanity, manipulation and chicanery, and sleight of hand - cunning with intention to deceive - apart from being taken into firm grasp by Lady Mountbatten.

Mountbatten quickly went through his preliminary round of talks with the Indian leaders. Whereas Jinnah explained that the whole basis of Cabinet Mission Plan rested on its being worked "in a spirit of cooperation and mutual trust", Patel was deadly opposed to parity and was for partition.

H.M. Seervai, after a careful evaluation of the source material available came to the conclusion that "the relevant documents in the *Transfer of Power* relied upon by Ayesha Jalal, supports the paradoxical statement that 'It was Congress that insisted on partition. It was Jinnah who was against partition'."[180] According to Ayesha Jalal, "Mountbatten failed to perceive that the real object of Jinnah was to secure a united India with parity at the Centre."[181] That was the position in end April/early May 1947.

Having come to the conclusion that the Cabinet Mission Plan was dead, Mountbatten hurried through the partition plan and advanced the date for transfer of power with catastrophic results.[182] Power was to be transferred to two Dominions, and Congress ditched Lahore 1929 resolution of *Puma Swaraj,* Complete Independence, for pragmatic reasons. The events moved so fast and with such rapidity, that the Sikh leadership was found wanting in chartering a correct strategy to tackle crucial problems after due deliberations.

The Sikh objective was clear, to avoid Hindu and Muslim domination. Ideas of various models, the Soviet, Swiss and others, were there, but needed instant consolidation. For instance, Swaran Singh and Bhim Sen Sachar on April 21, demanded division of the Punjab to two or three autonomous province[183] the third meant separation of the Haryana area. The Sikh leadership should have come out decisively for a three-way division of Punjab, if nothing else.

It was obvious to Jinnah that the Punjab would be partitioned at about Ravi and in case the Sikhs threw in their lot with Pakistan the borders would be around Panipat. He made overtures to

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the Sikhs and offered them special status in the area between Ravi-Panipat, a separate unit in East Punjab, with special privileges for Sikhs in Pakistan as a whole. He could not suggest them transfer of population straightaway, as it had wider implications.

Penderal Moon who played a major role as a go-between thought that it was not impossible for the Sikhs to get the right to secede.[184] What was needed was earnestness in negotiations.

The Sikh leadership bereft of any knowledge of international affairs or world politics could not apply its mind to the Soviet model of 'autonomous units' with some of them even being members of the recently established United Nations Organisations. Tara Singh later candidly admitted: "The reason for our not pressing the demand for a Sikh State was our ignorance of history and world politics. None of us had known that a community can have a state of its own in spite of its being a minority in that area. Jewish State 'Israel' is one such recent example. I came to know about it in 1949 when I was in Almora prison. I was informed there by some one that Russian newspaper 'Pravda' had once commented that in this world there are two communities who possess all the ingredients of being a nation but have no homeland of their own. These communities are the Jews and the Sikhs. The Jews have got their homeland but the Sikhs have no homeland so far. When Israel came into existence, the Muslim population there was 600,000. Christians were 86,000 while Jews were only 46,000. But within a few years, the population of Jews has grown up to 6,000,000 due to migration of Jews from other countries. But for such ignorance, we might have obtained a Sikh State particularly when the Britishers sympathised with us."[185]

The meeting between Jinnah and Tara Singh in early May in Lahore failed to fructify as the latter bolted from the place of meeting shortly before the appointed time. Jinnah met the Maharaja of Patiala on May 15, and spoke of a semi-autonomous Sikh State aligned with Pakistan, but the subject matter was reported to Congress leaders in Delhi, and Jinnah came to know of that.[186]

The Sikh leaders catered more to the interests of the Congress than their own, and there were a number of them who willy nilly served as Congress stooges and double crossers. Mangal Singh on April 24, warned the Sikhs against "tempting offers" being made by the Muslim League. Swaran Singh, on May 10, stated that the" Sikh were determined not to remain under Muslim subjugation" and Baldev Singh, on May 25, warned against "unnatural solicitude" of Jinnah for the Sikh, while a number of others spoke of, and were influenced by, general lack of credibility in Jinnah.[187] None of them warned against Hindu subjugation and Gandhi's wile.

Congress leaders were fully aware of the predicament of the Sikh leadership, and took full advantage of that, to deny them any meaningful concessions. For instance, the Sikh demand for exclusion of Haryana area from East Punjab, to pave the way for Punjabi speaking state, *Punjabi Suba,* was negatived by Congress leaders in May 1947 itself when Mountbatten was hammering the partition plan down the throats of the Indian leaders. Baldev Singh's seeing the Viceroy by end of May and telling him that "there was no sign of either party making any concessions to the Sikhs" marked the culmination of the failure of the Sikh leadership. Giani Kartar Singh in April 1947 had started serious negotiations with Jinnah for a possible understanding. He could have outwitted the Hindu Congress leaders to provide Sikhs ironclad guarantees or yield to Sikh interests as in the separation of Haryana from the Punjab, but was thwarted by Tara Singh and Baldev Singh.[188]

It may be mentioned that the demand for a separate Jat State including the whole or part of Meerut Division of U.P. and large parts of Ambala Division, was mooted in April 1947 as the

partition line would have been near Panipat in case of the Sikhs throwing their lot with the Muslim League. Giani Kartar Singh, after he had entered into serious parleys with Jinnah told Sir R. Jenkins that the Sikhs could let the Hindu Jats have Rohtak, Gurgaon, half of Karnal and Hissar districts; in Ambala, the Sikhs and Muslims were in majority.[189] Since Giani Kartar Singh was frustrated by Tara Singh and Baldev Singh from outwitting the Hindu Congress leaders, the demand for a separate Jat state subsided, and the Sikhs were left to bite the dust.

Sir Edward Penderal Moon, Secretary, Development Board, Government of India in a last ditch effort in his letter of June 27, 1947, to Chief of Viceroy's Staff advocated exclusion of Gurgaon, Hissar, Rohtak and Karnal districts from East Punjab. He wrote, "The Sikhs have already put this demand to Congress who hesitate to accept it." He suggested that "this Sikh demand should be taken out of Hindu cluches as they want to be - and put in a more or less independent position of their own". He hinted at the creation of a Sikh buffer state between India and Pakistan by planned migration.[190] Mountbatten wrote to Jinnah and Nehru. Jinnah sent no reply, while Nehru declined saying that the time was short.[191] Mountbatten could not act on his own as he was angling to be independent India's first Governor General.

It only showed the uneasy flutterings of the Sikhs, now firmly in the grip of Hindu Congress leaders. They seemed to have lost their case for equality of opportunity in the new dispensation even before the British were out.

By May 1947, both Gandhi and Nehru were seized of guilt complex. On May 28, they wanted Mountbatten to shelve the partition plan and enforce the Cabinet Mission Plan as an "*award in letter and spirit*". After being badly mauled, they were now willing to accept what was available to them for about a year from May 16, 1946. Matters had gone far ahead, and it was not possible to reverse the trends. Even after partition, as V. P. Menon pleaded in the *Statesman* of October 21, 1947, the Hindu Congress leaders were asking for unity at the top in Defence, Foreign Affairs and Communications, between the two sovereign states of India and Pakistan, on the basis of sovereign equality.[192] That gives an insight into the working of the Hindu mind.

Mountbatten's June 3 plan advancing the date of independence to August 15, only helped to precipitate matters. Both the Muslim League (June 10) and Congress (June 14) accepted the partition plan while Akali Dal rejected it. The division of Punjab because of the Sikh demand, and that of Bengal, was a foregone conclusion. The Muslim League quickly followed up with plan to denude West Punjab of the Sikhs. The Hindus followed them. The Sikh leaders accepted the idea of transfer of population in June when they should have done so a couple of months earlier. The deliberate delay by Mountbatten in announcing the Radcliffe Award, which was ready by August 13,[193] only helped to create more anarchy and mayhem. It, however, helped Nehru to have certain changes effected in Ferozepur and Gurdaspur sectors which gave India Ferozepur canal head works besides linkage to the state of Jammu and Kashmir, and paved the way for Kashmiris becoming 'integral' part of India.

Because of the Sikhs throwing their lot with India, the whole of present Punjab and Jammu & Kashmir, parts of present Himachal Pradesh and Haryana could become part of India. But for that, the boundary line would have been somewhere near Panipat as Hindus were in majority only in Gurgaon and Rohtak and parts of Karnal and Hissar districts of undivided India.[194]

Were Hindu Congress leaders grateful to the Sikhs for bringing about this addition to the

Union of India? No, not the least. Gandhi, Nehru and Patel were deeply imbued in Hindu Shastras and cultural mores. What did their study of Hindu Shastras teach them? Since Gandhi wanted to re-establish Ram Rajya, it would be fair to refer to Ramayana. In Ramayana, apart from Lord Rama's killing of Bali in a dubious manner, the victory of Rama over Ravana would have been impossible but for the help rendered by Babhikhan, Ravana's brother. He gave away family secrets for which he was dubbed by Ravana as traitor to the country and the family. Did Hindus have any better words for him? No, not at all. In every Indian language there is a saying for him; '*ghar ka bhedi lanka dhae* "one who betraying the secrets of the family, causes fall of Lanka - an impregnable fortress". And, since the days of Ramayana down to the present times, no Hindu has named his child after Babhikhan.[195] The attitude of Gandhi, Nehru and Patel to Sikh leaders could not be any different. To them, Tara Singh and the Sikhs meant a confused lot, who could be bought over or hoodwinked at will.

On August 15, 1947, India was partitioned into two dominions - Hindus and Muslims establishing their rule, whereas the Sikhs, the third party with whom the British negotiated drew a blank. It was remarkable, that on August 15, Hinduism in India after a millennium of slavery came of its own. This was the first time since the violent extermination of Budhism under the auspices of Adi Shankaracharya, that a homogenised caste-Hindu state came into being from north to south, and east to west, thanks to the legacy of British imperialism. Cut into two, nay three, pieces and because of bloodshed of her innocent children, *Bharat Mata* was bleeding profusely, and they raised the hand of most cleverer from amongst themselves and said, lo, he is the father of the nation! Gandhi, conscious of the immorality of the declaration, spent the day in quietitude in Calcutta showing an apparent remorse at the bloodshed for which he was no less responsible. Verily, he was the father of Indian independence, with its concomitant partition and bloodshed. What is worse, this bloodshed between Hindus and Muslims in India has continued ever since on a regular basis, as part of that legacy. And of late, Sikhs too have also been the object of the Hindu's vendetta.

Leaving for what was to be Pakistan, on August 7, 1947, Jinnah wanted the Hindus and the Muslims to "bury the past". The following day, Patel vituperated, "The poison has been removed from the body of India" while at the same time hoped that "It will not be long before they return to us."[196] Where did the poison lay?

There were two people who till the last fought for Indian unity. One were the Pathans under the leadership of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan. The other were the Sikhs led by Shiromani Akali Dal. Describing the state of his people, Abdul Ghaffar Khan said, "Tied hand and foot, we have been thrown to the wolves."[197] The position of the Sikhs was no different, except that they did not have the leadership to realise what havoc it had caused to the community. The Sikhs had been thrown to the wolves of Brahminical vintage. For the first time in their history, they came under the tutelage of Brahminical Hindus. They were at the mercy of Gandhiites, underpinned by ferocious Arya Samajists, who in alignment, aimed at their very identity.

Before leaving for Pakistan, Jinnah paid a farewell call on his friend Sardar Bahadur Sir Sobha Singh and told him, that, "The Sikhs by not opting for self rule had committed a big blunder." Sobha Singh said, "By fully trusting Hindus and linking our destiny with them, we have done well. The Hindus will never maltreat us or betray us. -" Jinnah quipped, "Sardar Bahadur you had the Hindus only as your co-slaves; now, you will know the real Hindu when he becomes your master and you become his slave."[198]

Jinnah was not far wrong. The process had already started. To cite only two instances.

One, Gandhi by June 1947 had already resumed his attack on the Sikh identity and made his intentions very clear as to the treatment awaiting the Sikhs in independent India. Instead of thanking Master Tara Singh for bringing half of Punjab into India, Gandhi adopted superciliary attitude and administered him a rebuke when Tara Singh called on him shortly after the Sikhs throwing in their lot with the Hindus under the June 3 plan. Gandhi took note of Sikhs assertion of being a separate religion and averred that "all the poison was spread by Macaulay (he meant Cunningham) who wrote the history of the Sikhs. Since Macaulay (sic) was a well known historian, everyone swallowed what he said."[199] He was for removal of that poison. This only showed that Gandhi's malice and ignorance went hand in hand. Gandhi also averred that, "The *Granth Sahib* of the Sikhs was actually based on the Hindu scriptures". Also in this age of Atom Bomb, "the sword was a rusty weapon." Gandhi took a malicious note of the Sikhs living "in great material comfort". Later on August 5, at Punja Sahib, he ridiculed the Sikh concept of one Sikh being equal to *sawa* lakh, a legion.[200]

Two, Chaudhri Lehri Singh, a Congressite Hindu leader on July 9, 1947, wrote to Sardar Patel, "As you are no doubt aware, now-a-days in the Punjab the Sikh movement (sponsored by Tara Singh) for the creation of a Punjabi speaking province comprising the whole of Jullundur Division, Amritsar and parts of Ambala Division is gaining ground. This will result in isolating the Haryana *Prant,* viz districts of Rohtak, Karnal, Gurgaon and some parts of Hissar. To propose further division of the truncated Punjab is definitely actuated by the sole desire of establishing Sikh hegemony in the Central Punjab. This move on the part of Sikh leaders cannot be justified in any way." And, Patel wrote back on July 11, 1947, "I can assure you that at present there is no question of any division of the Eastern Punjab on the lines you have referred to."[201] Hindus had started marshalling themselves against the non-existing 'Sikh hegemony' in the central Punjab, even before the partition had been effected.

Earlier in June, according to Dr. Gopal Singh, he approached Gandhi to seek his help in the formation of Punjabi speaking state in what was going to be East Punjab. Gandhi's sharp reaction, when there was no talk about mass migration of minorities from the two dominions, was "But you are then asking for a Sikh State." When told that no single community would be in a majority, Gandhi calmed down and said, "If this be so, bring me a blueprint. I shall speak to others."[202] The riots and mass migration that followed changed the demography of East Punjab. What stood out was the resolve of top Congress leadership including acclaimed father of 'our' nation not to let the Sikhs equality of treatment and opportunity in independent India.

This obviously reflected the total failure of the Sikh leadership. What were the causes? Obviously, ineptness of the Sikh leadership.

The Congress and the Muslim League were fortunate to be led by men of extraordinary ability.

Gandhi and Jinnah were highly educated, Bar-at-Laws, and had well developed faculties of reasoning and logic. Both of them enjoyed unquestioned position at the top and provided unified command structure.

Gandhi was an original thinker, who could think both with his brain and his skull.[203] He

could talk for hours on end, often leaving the listener confused, as to what he really meant. Inconsistency was the hallmark of his voluminous pronouncements and he brought to bear hypocrisy on a vast scale in public life. He was ably assisted by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru another Bar-at-Law, a pseudo socialist, well versed in international affairs, world politics, Indian culture and world history; and Sardar Vallabhai Patel, yet another Bar-at-Law who could surpass any fundamentalist Hindu in stance and mien. They constituted trinity, complementing each other with Gandhi at the apex. Then, they had a Working Committee to provide the second ring of leadership and a broader, democratic, framework.

Jinnah was a leading lawyer who could change his arguments midway and argue his case both ways. He was the 'sole spokesman' and provided the solitary leadership. He was well versed both in national and international affairs. He was a man of dogged determination, and despite the weakness of his position following the 1937 elections, kept himself at the top by an adroit degree of maneuverability and pragmatism. He was ably assisted by his personal assistant and the typewriter! He had his High Command of Muslim League to provide second rather third ring of leadership to be used at command to put off or ratify a given decision.

The Sikh leadership emerged splintered from the Gurdwara reform movement, thanks to Gandhi's and later Hailey's machinations. Shiromani Akali Dal, Central Akali Dal and pro-British elements kept themselves warring against each other, prevented emergence of a solid and unified leadership. The Sikhs did not have a leader of towering stature, of high standing, higher education, much less a Bar-at-Law or a statesman who could exert his primacy.

The leadership which came up was fractured and inept. Tara Singh was an ordinary graduate and could not match the top Congress leadership's sophistry or intellectual attainments. He struck to anti-imperialism as an article of faith and a fixed position, when a pragmatic approach dictated a compromise with the British and adoption of a rational outlook which could have put him at an advantageous position vis a vis the Hindus and the Muslims. He was handicapped by his deep commitment to the Congress and the perverse perception of Sikh history, which saw purport of emergence of Sikhism in protection of Hinduism.

Giani Kartar Singh though less educated was the brain of the Akali party and showed traces of brilliance which were marred because he could not come up as the supreme leader. Baldev Singh was very mediocre whose only qualification was that he was moneyed and financed the Akali party. He was not fit for the job he was entrusted with. The Sikhs operated through All Parties Sikh Conference which provided for induction of all sorts of people, disparate in character, interests and alignments, even infiltrators like Niranjan Singh Gill, Gandhiites, and others.

The Sikh leaders probably never did much reading on overall current Indian situation, much less on international affairs and world politics. Harnam Singh who assisted them, apart from being a Congress-pet, was a municipal lawyer, with not much width of understanding.

In short, the Sikhs had a collegiate type of leadership, of conflicting interests and pulling apart which lost opportunities when they were knocking at the door, in the process, jeopardising the Sikh communal identity, and pushing it to untold sufferings.

On the whole, the struggle for freedom threw up anti-British or anti-imperialist forces, but none of them truly national or secular in character. To wit, in the Punjab, there were the Akalis and

other Sikh groups, the Hindu Mahasabha and the Hindu National Party, and the Muslim League catering to sectoral interests, and Indian National Congress and the Unionists cutting across communal lines. For instance. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and Mohammd Ali Jinnah came to the rescue of Akalis in securing the 1925 Gurdwara Act on terms favourable to them, and in post-1937 era, one or the other group of the Sikhs and the Hindu National Party joined hands with the Unionists in forming the broad-based government in the Punjab, despite the latter having an absolute majority of its own.

The Congress throughout the period, except for a short span of about a year following 1946 elections, remained on the sidelines and played a retrogressive role. From 1937, the Punjab Congress under Gopi Chand Bhargava was isolating itself to represent only urban Hindu interests - mainly *bania* and shopkeeper classes; and since the end of 19th century it provided an exclusive outlet to Arya Samaj to give vent to its sectarian political aspirations. The Congress in the Punjab, at micro level, was divided into two groups, one echoing Hindu chauvinistic ideals, and the other trying to carry the Sikhs alongwith it. The central Congress leadership, during the struggle, made certain promises to the Sikhs, not with a view to carry them out, but to absorb them within the framework of Hinduism, on which there was a broad unity in approach in the two wings of the Congress.

Herein lay the seeds of the future conflict for the Sikhs in independent India.

Footnotes:

1. During the freedom struggle, 73 of 121 persons executed were the Sikhs and 2147 of 2664 sentenced to life imprisonment in the Andamans were the Sikhs. In the Jallianwala Bagh massacre which brought to ahead the demand for freedom, out of 1302 men, women and children gunned down by General Dyer, 799 were the Sikhs.
2. Nirad C. Chaudhuri, *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian,* (London, 1951), p. 404.
3. Ibid, p. 406.
4. Ibid, For instance the Hindu artisans employed for the construction of Qutab Minar in Delhi after the destruction of Hindu and Jain temples emitted their disgust in the form of abusive writings in nagri script on the Qutab walls.
5. Ibid, p. 407.
6. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee explicitly put forth in the introduction of his novel *Anand Math* and again in the introduction of the second edition, specifically owning up the critical estimate published in *The Liberal of* April 8, 1882, that his immediate object was putting an end to the Muslim tyranny and replacing it by Hindu rule.

   The ascetic, inspired by patriotism and directed by a mysterious preceptor, organises a religious order of rebels and revolutionaries and rises in revolt. He wins against the Muslims but is defeated by the troops of East Indian Company. Then the preceptor tries to persuade him to give up as the English were destined to rule till there was revival of Aryan faith and "Hinduism becomes great in knowledge, virtue and power." The preceptor declares, "Who is the enemy? The English are friends, there is no one who can fight the English and win in the end." The whole inspiration was anti-Muslim and yet Hindus wanted Muslims to join them shoulder to shoulder and sing Bande Matram to their destruction.

   Following partition of Bengal in 1905, Hindus built up a massive *swadeshi* movement based on *Anand Math* and its song *Bande Matram.* Paradoxically, the same people after getting the partition of Bengal as part of Indian rescinded in 1911, agreed to the same, with East Bengal

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emerging as apart of sovereign Pakistan. They yet again assisted in its emerging as a sovereign state of Bangladesh in 1971. So much for their wisdom and foresight. See, Ibid, pp. 418-20.

7. The Muslims objected to third, fourth and five stanzas of *Bande Matram*.
8. See, Ravinder Kumar, "The Secular Culture of India"(1984) in his *The Making of a Nation,* (Delhi, 1989), p. 89
9. Ibid, pp. 190-91.
10. Cf. H.M. Seervai *Partition of India, Legend and Reality,* (Bombay, 1989), pp. 12-13; S. Gopal, *S. Radhakrishnan, A Biography,* (Delhi, 1989), p. 68.
11. Indulal K. Yajnik, *Gandhi, As* I *Knew Him,* (Delhi, 1943), p. 302.
12. Nirad C. Chaudhuri, n. 3, p. 432.
13. J.S. Dhanak, "Lala Lajpat Rai and Communal politics in India", *Panjab Past and Present,* (hereinafter referred to as *PP&P*), Vol. XVI, October 1982, pp. 184-99.
14. Ibid, pp. 189-91.
15. Gandhi wrote, "I have not read amore disappointing book from a reformer so great." *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi,* (hereinafter referred to as *CW*), (Delhi, Publications Division), Vol 24, pp. 144-45.
16. Statement in April 1928, quoted in Dhanak, n. 13, p. 197.
17. Jawaharlal Nehru, *Glimpses of World History* [1934-35] (Delhi, 1982 reprint), p. 720.
18. Nirad C. Chaudhuri, n. 3, p. 486.
19. Nirad C. Chudhuri, Thy Hand, Great Anarch! India, 1921-52, (London, 1987), p. 726.
20. Abul Kalam Azad, *India Wins Freedom,* (Delhi, 1988), pp. 16-18.
21. Ibid, p. 134.
22. Ravinder Kumar, n. 8, p. 192.
23. Cf. V.B. Kulkarni, *K.M. Munshi,* (Builders of Modem India) (Delhi, 1982) p. 216.
24. Nirad C. Chaudhuri, n. 19, p. 774.
25. The *Searchlight,* January 21, 1927, CW, Vol. 32, p. 564.
26. Dhanak, n. 13, p. 194.
27. *Tribune* December 26, 1924 quoted in Ibid, p. 195.
28. K.L. Tuteja, *Sikhs Politics,* (Kurukshetra, 1984), pp. 146-47.
29. Kailash Chander Gulati, *The Akalis Past and Present,* (Delhi, 1974), p. 44.
30. "Perils of a Communal Situation", editorial in *Tribune,* July 12, 1931.
31. He must have been seized of the spirit of his ancestor Gangadhar Kaul alias Gangu Brahmin.
32. *CW* Vol. 38, p. 315; Tuteja n. 28, p. 47.
33. *CW,* Vol. 39, p. 412.
34. *CW,* Vol. 41, p. 546.
35. *Tribune,* October 16 1929, quoted in Gulati, n. 29, p. 47.
36. Ibid.
37. *CW,* Vol. 42, p. 306.
38. *Young India,* January 7, 1930, in *CW,* Vol. 42, pp. 378-79.
39. *Tribune,* January 20, 1930.

39a. Jawaharlal Nehru, *Letters to Chief Ministers* (Delhi, 1986), Vol. 2 p. 291.

40. M.S. Sahni, "Bhai Jodh Singh and Simon Commission", *PP&P,* Vol. XVI, October 1986, p. 262.
41. *Tribune,* April 15, 1930, quoted in Tuteja, n. 28, p. 149.
42. Gulati, n. 29, p. 55.
43. Tuteja, n. 28, p. 150.
44. Text in *Young India,* March 5, 1931, in CW Vol. 45, pp. 231-33.
45. Nirad C. Chaudhuri, n. 19, p. 49.

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46. *CW,* Vol. 45, p. 121.
47. Ibid. What sort of faith Gandhi was keeping with the Sikhs at the time? He had agreed to plead with the Viceroy to commute the death sentence of Bhagat Singh and others. But he backed out when he learnt that Bhagat Singh under the influence of Bhai Randhir Singh of Narnagwal, had taken a resolve to take baptism and lead a *pucca* Sikh life thereafter. Gandhi in a speech in Delhi on March 7, 1931, said that" history records numerous instances that they who use the sword perish by the sword". However, on Bhagat Singh and his companions being hanged on March 23, Gandhi chose to flow with the popular acclaim for the heroes and said that they had become martyrs. What a thuggee!

    There was a lot of heart burning amongst revolutionaries, the members of Hindustan Republican Socialist Army, at Gandhi's backtracking. Bhagat Singh's last wish, that he be administered *amrit,* Sikh baptism, a by a group of five including Bhai Randhir Singh was not fulfilled by the British. Gandhi was not displeased. Though Bhagat Singh had grown a beard of about 4-5 cms, and tied a knot under his turban by the time of his martyrdom, Hindus till today continue to show him clean-shaven with a hat on his head. That is to give expression to their atavistic feelings. Bhagat Singh had correctly read the Hindu mind, when he told Bhai Randhir Singh that he was getting the acclaim of the Hindu's only because he had shed his *keshas*. Once he re-keeps the keshas and becomes Guru's Sikhs he would be disowned by the Hindus. Cf. Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh, *Autobiography*, (Tr: Dr. Trilochan Singh) (Ludhiana, 1992) p. 285. For photograph of Bhagat Singh taken a few hours before he was hanged, see. Ibid, opp. p. 286.
48. Gurmit Singh, *Gandhi and the Sikhs,* (Sirsa, 1969), p. 43.
49. G.D. Tendulkar, *Mahatma;* (*Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi*), vol III, p. 195.
50. AICC Resolution of March 7, 1931, Ibid, p. 1031; CW Vol 44, p. 45.
51. For text of Sikh demands see Gulati, n.29, pp. 238-39.
52. Emphasisadded, *CW,* Vol. 48 p. 98.
53. *CW,* Vol. 58, p. 192.
54. Pyare Lal's *The Epic Fast* (1934), gives graphic account of the events leading to the Poona Pact.
55. *CW,* Vol. 85, p. 20.
56. Shortly after the author joined the Indian Foreign Office in early 1960s, he asked one of his colleagues, a Brahmin, working in Kashmir Unit of the Ministry, as to what we mean when we say in the UN Security Council that Kashmir is an *integral* part of India, and how UP or Bihar, for that matter, are not. The colleague could only say that it (the phrase) was the invention of clever Hindu mind. Only after reading Gandhi's description of the Untouchables as integral part of Hinduism, the meaning of the phrase Kashmir as integral part of Indian became clear.
57. Kartar Singh & Gurdial Singh Dhillon, *Stones from Sikh History,* Book IX, (Delhi, 1981), pp. 260-78, for full version.
58. Ibid.
59. *CW*, Vol 63, p. 174 fn.
60. Ibid, pp. 185-86.
61. What was the origin of the word *Harijan* for the depressed classes in not known. However, the term Harijan for the *dalits* was used by Koer Singh in *Gurbilas Patshahis 10,* (1751). Also, *CW,* Vol. 63, pp. 233-35.
62. Ibid, p. 267.
63. Ibid, p. 294.
64. Kartar Singh & Dhillon, n. 57, p. 272.
65. Letter dated 14 November, 1936 to Amrit Kaur, CW, Vol. 64, p. 41.
66. The distribution of 175 seats in the Punjab Legislative Council was as follows:

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	Seats	Percentage
Muslims	86	49.14
Hindus	43	24.57
Sikhs	32	18.29
Anglo-Indian	1	0.57
Europeans	1	0.57
Commerce & Industry	1	0.57
Zamindars	5	2.86
Labour	3	1.71
University	1	0.57
Christians	2	1.14

67. Gulati, n. 29, p. 74.
68. Ibid, pp. 69-70.
69. Ibid, p. 75.
70. Tuteja, n. 28, pp. 178-79.
71. *Tribune,* November 20, 1936, quoted in Gulati, n. 29, p. 75.
72. Y.P. Bajaj, "The Sikhs and the First General Elections (1936-37) to Punjab Legislative Assembly: An Analysis," *PP&P,* vol. XXI, April 1987, pp. 103-08.
73. Gulati, n. 29, p. 76.
74. For text see Gulati, n. 29, pp. 210-11; Tuteja, n. 28, pp. 181-82.
75. The Pact greatly strengthened Jinnah at the national level. Cf, Ian Talbot, *Punjab and the Raj.* 1849-1947, (Delhi, 1988), p. 125.
76. *Tuteja*, n. 28, p. 183.
77. *CW,* Vol 68, pp. 1-2.
78. *CW,* Vol. 70, p. 259.
79. Gulati, n.29, p. 77.
80. Satya Pal to Dr. Rajendra Prasad dated January 24, 1940 in Tuteja n. 28, pp. 188-89.
81. Ibid, pp. 191-92.
82. Christine Effenberg, *The Political Status of the Sikhs during the Indian National Movement,* 1935-1947, (Delhi, 1989), pp. 92-94, 113; Tuteja, n. 28, pp. 188-89.
83. Text Effenberg, n. 82, pp. 95-96.
84. Ibid, pp. 112-13; (also Gulati, n. 29, p. 80).
85. Ibid, p. 116.
86. N.N. Mitra, *Indian Annual Register,* (hereinafter *IAR*)*,* 1940, part 1, p. 337.
87. Tuteja, n. 28, p-206.
88. Ibid, p. 193.
89. Gandhi considered that an affront to his leadership and did not relent till he had hounded Subhash Chandra Bose out of India.
90. *CW,* Vol. 73, pp. 395-96.
91. Ibid, pp. 54-56.
92. Indu Banga, "Crisis in Punjab Politics, 1940-47" in Joseph T.O' Connel, et, el(ed), *Sikh History and Religion in the Twentieth Century,* (Toronto, 1988), pp. 238-39.
93. Baldev Raj Nayar, *Minority Politics in Punjab,* (Princeton, 1966), p. 80.
94. Effenberg, n. 82, pp. 129-30; Indu Banga, n. 92, p. 239.
95. For text, see Gurmit Singh, *History of Sikh Struggles.* (Delhi, 1989), pp. 225-35.
96. The Congress Working Committee in its resolution of April 2, 1942, said that it could not think of "compelling the people of any territorial unit to remain in an Indian Union, against their declared and established will."

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97. This was in sharp contrast to Gandhi's analysis of Britain being worsted, and his decision to stab them in the back by resort to civil disobedience.
98. According to master Tara Singh, the Hindus like Raja Nerendra Nath, Sir Gokal Chand Narang, Mahashe Khushal Chand of daily *Milap,* Mahashe Krishan of daily Partap, Goswami Ganesh Das, and Bhai Parmanand played their due role in bringing about this pact. Effenberg, n. 82, p. 134.
99. Ajit Singh Sarhadi, *Punjabi Suba, The Story of Struggles,* (Delhi, 1970), p. 63.
100. This was despite the briefing on Guru Gobind Singh done by Kapur Singh, I.C.S., in March 1942. Kapur Singh, *Saachi Sakhi,* (Jalandhar, 1972), pp. 74-76.
100a. Gandhi was moved by his reading of Lord Krishna's running away with the clothes of naked Gopis taking a bath in a pool of water, and dictating terms to them from an unequal position. He thought that the Japanese overrunning of South-East Asia had placed the British in dire circumstances, and placed him in an advantageous position to dictate terms.
101. Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India* (1946), (Delhi, 1981), p. 488.
102. Effenberg, n. 82, p. 132.
103. Text, Gurmit Singh, n. 95, pp. 241-44.
104. Linlithgow to Amery, September 5, 1942, text. Ibid, pp. 24-48.
105. Glancy to Linlithgow, November 28, 1942, text. Ibid, p. 262.
106. Jaswant Singh (ed), *Autobiography of Master Tara Singh,* quoted in Gurmit Singh, *Failures of Akali Leadership, (*Sirsa, 1981), p. 61.
107. Sarbadi, n. 99, p. 68.
108. Indu Banga, n. 92, p. 242.
109. Gulati, n. 29, p. 75.
110. Indu Banga, n. 92, p. 242.
111. Effenberg, n. 82. p. 120.
112. Sarhadi, n 99, pp. 72-73.
113. Ibid, p. 74.
114. V.P. Menon, *The Transfer of Power in India,* (Madras, 1968), p. 163.
115. Wavell to Amery, August 15, 1944, text, Gurmit Singh, n. 95, pp. 356-61.
116. N.N. Mitra, IAR, 1944, Vol 2, p. 210.
117. For proceedings, see Ibid, pp. 211-15.
118. For details. Ibid, pp. 218-21.
119. Ibid, p. 218.
120. Ibid, 219.
121. Ibid, p. 220.
122. Ibid, p. 221.
123. Ibid, pp. 215-17.
124. Ibid, p. 217.
125. For Text, Ibid, pp. 221-22.
126. Harnam Singh, Punjab, *Homeland of the Sikhs* (Lahore, 1945), pp. 77-80, quoted in Gulati, n. 29, p. 107.
127. M.C. Setalvad, *Bhulabhai Desai* (Builders of Modern India), (Delhi, 1968), quoted in H.M. Seervai. n. p. 112.
128. Gulati, n. 29, p. 107.
129. Effenberg, n. 82, pp. 153-55.
130. Indu Banga, n. 92, p. 249.
131. R.L. Khipple, *The Simla Conference,* (Lahore, 1945), p. 93.
132. For proceedings, see Mitra, IAR, 1945, Vol. 2, pp. 164-70.

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133. Ibid, p. 166.
134. Ibid, p. 167.
135. Emphasis added. Ibid, pp. 165-66.
136. Ibid, p. 168.
137. Gulati, n. 29, p. 113.
138. Sarhadi, n. 99, pp. 86.
139. Jinnah told President and Secretary All India Sikh Students Federation that he treated Sikhs as a nation entitled to homeland.
140. Sarhadi, n. 99, pp. 87-88.
141. For text, see Mitra, IAR, 1946, pp. 200-01.
142. For record of discussions, see Nicholas Mansergh(ed), *Transfer of Power*, (hereinafter referred to as TP), Vol. 7, Doc 56, pp. 138-41.
143. Kapur Singh, n. 100, p. 94. This later led Kapur Singh to write a paper "The Stupid Sikhs".
144. Gopal Singh, *A History of the Sikh People,* 1469-1988, (Delhi, 1988) p. 704.
145. Effenberg, n. 82, p. 163.
146. 'For instance, Nehru said there would be no Pakistan even if the British or the United Nations Organisation agreed to create one. His real feelings towards the Sikhs were reflected when he said that Master Tara Singh had the unique distinction of sitting on about 15 stools and that he (Tara Singh) was free to align with the Muslim league, if he so liked. Nehru, like a spoilt child that he was, indulged in a lot of bravado and indiscrete talk. For official version, see *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru,* (Delhi, 1972) Vol. 15. pp. 120-25.
147. TP, Vol. VII, p. 434.
148. Ibid, pp. 465-66.
149. Seervai, n. 10, p. 45.
150. Ibid.
151. Ibid, p. 64.
152. Ibid, pp. 38-39.
153. Tara Singh to Pethic Lawrence and reply of June 1, Mitra, IAR, 1946, Vol 1, PP. 201-02.
154. Ibid, pp. 202-05.
155. Seervai, n. 10, p. 67.
156. Ibid, p. 65.
157. Ibid, p, 73.
158. Ibid, p. 70.
159. Ibid, pp. 75-76; Azad, n. 20, pp. 164-65.
160. Effenber, n. 82, p. 151.
161. Ibid, p. 162; Sarhadi, n. 99. p. 97
162. A. B. Rajput, *Punjab Crisis and Cure*, (Lahore, 1947), p. 58.
163. Sarhabi, n. 99. p. 97.
164. V.P. Menon, n. 114. p. 305.
165. Emphasis added Seervai, n. 10, p. 78.
166. TP, Vol IX, p. 153.
167. Emphasis added Ibid, pp. 240-42.
168. Seervai, n. 99., pp. 102-03.
169. Kapur Singh, n. 100, p. 97.
170. Sarhadi, n. 99 pp. 102-03.
171. TP, Vol. IX, p. 319.
172. Jawaharlal Nehru , *Glimpses of World History,* (Delhi 1982 reprint), pp. 128-29.
173. For a comprehensive analysis, see C.H. Heimasth, *Indian Nationalism and Hindu Social Reform*

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Bombay, 1964, and N.S. Bose, *The Indian Awakening in Bengal,* (Calcutta 1960).

174. Tendulkar, n. 48, vol. VII, pp. 298, 307.
175. Gulati, n. 29, p. 128.
176. Quoted in Rajput, n. 162, p. 73.
177. Ibid, p. 75.
178. G.D. Khosla, *Stem Reckoning,* (Delhi, 1949), quoted in Sarhadi, n. 99, p. 121.
179. *Dawn,* Delhi March 14, 1947, quoted in Rajput, n. 162, pp. 118-19.
180. Seervai, n. 10 pp. 123.
181. Ibid.
182. Ibid, p. 139.
183. Durga Das (*E*d), *Sardar Patel's Correspondence*, Vol. V. (Ahmedabad, 1971-74) pp. 1292-93.
184. Penderal Moon, *Divide and Quit,* (London, 1961), p. 86.
185. Jaswant Singh (Ed), *Autobiography of Master Tara Singh,* p. 197 quoted in Gurmit Singh n. 106, pp. 64-65.
186. For details of Jinnah's talks with the Sikh leaders including Maharaja of Patiala, Hardit Singh Malik, Master Tara Singh and Giani Kartar Singh at Delhi, See Satindra Singh, *Khalistan, An Academic Analysis,* (Delhi 1982), pp. 64-67. Satindra Singh places these talks in 1946 which is not correct.
187. Ganda Singh, "A Diary of Partition Days", *PP&P,* Vol. XII, October 1978, p. 448.
188. Sarhadi, n. 99, p. 128.
189. Note by Jenkins, *TP* Vol, Document 113, p. 183.
190. TP, Vol. XI, p. 692.
191. Ibid.
192. Emphasis added. V.P. Menon, n. 114, p. 449.
193. Seervai, n. 10 p. 148.
194. Paying his tributes, C. Rajagopalachari attributed accession of half of Punjab and half of Bengal to Master Tara Singh. Jaswant Singh, n. 185, p. 401.
195. As Gandhi was a great devotee of Lord Krishna, we may highlight the main deductions drawn by him from his life. A recent biography of Lord Krishna by Pavan K Verma(Delhi, 1992), tellingly points out that,
    1. Lord Krishna in early childhood was caught stealing butter, but he chose to tell a lie;
    2. Lord Krishna ran away with the clothes of naked Gopis (taking bath in a pool of water) who had complained to his mother against his butter - stealing campaigns, and dictated terms to them from an unequal position;
    3. Lord Krishna could have come to the rescue of Daropti much earlier but did not, till the point of no return had been reached; and
    4. Lord Krishna in Mahabharta War, made Arjuna to shoot arrows at Karan in violation of accepted principles of war, and kill him. Arjuna throughout his life did not forgive himself but Lord Krishna had no remorse at all.

    Verily, *Satyamevajayate,* truth lies in victory.
196. Seervai, n. 10, p. 134.
197. Quoted in the *Spokesman* weekly, December 25, 1972.
198. Kapur Singh, n. 10. p. 134
199. CW, Vo. 88, pp. 4-5.
200. Ibid. Vol. 89, p 284.
201. Durga Das, n. 183, Vol. V, pp. 302-03.
202. Gopal Singh, n. 144, p. 713.
203. Paying him tributes on his death, Jairam Das Daulatram said "*woh kamal ki khopri thi*" - that was

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a remarkable skull.

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BOOK FOUR

THE SIKHS IN INDEPENDENT INDIA-I
SEARCH FOR A PLACE UNDER THE SUN
(1947-1950)

6
The Formative Phase
Framing the Constitution
(1947 - 1950)

The Indian independence brought about a cataclysmic change in the fortunes of the Sikh community. From being the third party with whom the British had negotiated for the transfer of power, the Sikhs soon lost their pre-emptive position, and were put on the downhill journey.' And that too, after having brought in half of the Punjab which made inevitable the partition of Bengal, and which enabled the accession of the state of Jammu and Kashmir to the Indian Union.

The Congress leadership which was never considerate towards the Sikhs, and had been a success in hoodwinking the Sikh leadership, now sought to overwhelm the Sikh identity by various stratagems. The Congress leaders made their intentions clear in the first few months after independence. It had its repercussions in the Constituent Assembly (CA) proceedings.

The 50-Member Advisory Committee of the CA for Fundamental Rights of Citizens and Safeguard of Minorities met on July 29-31, 1947, to consider its reports. Keeping in view the impending mass migrations in the Punjab, which was expected to give a decisive edge to 28 percent Hindus vis a vis 13 percent Sikhs in undivided Punjab, in the eastern part, the Advisory Committee decided to hold over, for the present, the whole question of the safeguards for the Sikh community. It did so on the specious plea of "the uncertainty of the position of the Sikhs at present pending the award of the Boundary Commission in the Punjab."[2] Presenting the report of the Advisory Committee to the CA on August 27, its Chairman, Sardar Vallabhbhai J. Patel, did not make a single reference to the plight of the Sikhs who in hundreds of thousands were being massacred.

The depressed classes, termed Harijans, who so far were grouped with the Sikhs for reservations as minorities were taken out of the group, and treated as part of the Hindus with a view to retain them within the framework of Hinduism.

Maharaja Yadavendra Singh of Patiala on Sept 5, 1947, wrote to Sardar Patel that the way "the recommendation over the question of granting representation to the Sikhs was amended so as to provide that the question of minorities in East Punjab shall be considered separately", had left the distinct impression among the Sikhs that they were being ignored. He went on to add,

> Of late I have had occasion to talk to very many Sikh leaders of importance. Their sense of frustration and despair knows no bounds. The young element is desperate and feels that they are faced with total extinction and are, therefore, prepared to make any sacrifice to ward off the threatening evil. . . . I would, therefore, strongly urge that the psychological opportunity of winning their lost confidence and faith should not be missed. An immediate

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declaration of the Government of India assuring the community of their rightful place in the body politic seems to be most essential.[3]

That was asking for the moon. The Congress leaders had their own designs, as we shall see.

The province of East Punjab was formally inaugurated on August 15, 1947. A joint Congress-Akali government headed by Gopi Chand Bhargava was inducted. The Congress and the Akalis, who were) members of the Unionist government till its fall in March 1947, continued to work in unison. Since the Congress with a strength of 51 members was evenly divided into two groups led by Gopi Chand Bhargava and Satya Pal (later Bhim Sen Sachar), the Akali group of 23 members played a decisive role in the rise and fall of governments led by Bhargava, Sachar and again Bhargava. It may be mentioned that Bhargava group was aligned with Sardar Patel while Satyapal-Sachar group with Jawaharlal Nehru at macro level.

The publication of Radcliffe Award, which left 40 percent of the Sikhs with rich canal colonies on the other side, on August 18, 1947, signalled the Muslim onslaught on the Sikhs and the Hindus in West Punjab. That invited repercussions in East Punjab, Delhi and western United Provinces (U.P.). The Sikhs were assisted by the workers of the Rashtriya Swym Sewak Sangh (RSS) who seemingly had the blessings of Sardar Patel.[4]

In West Punjab, the Sikhs were special targets of Muslim savagery. The Muslim attitude towards the Hindus was rather soft, may be because Muslim leaders expected quid pro quo in Hindu majority provinces. The Muslims wanted Hindus simply to go away, but sought to annihilate the Sikhs. They poignantly proclaimed for *Sikh ka sar*, *aur Hindu ka zar*, the Sikh's head and the Hindu's wealth.

On September 5, 1947, the Lahore Urdu Daily, *Zamindar*, edited by Maulana Zafar Ali Khan, M.K. Gandhi's collaborator during Khilafat days, published on the front page a highly provocative poem, the purport of which was *koi Sikh rahne na pae maghrabi Punjab main* - let no Sikh remain in West Punjab.[5] The same day, West Punjab Governor, Sir Francis Mudie, wrote to Governor General Muhammad Ali Jinnah reflecting the resolve of his government to secure the mass migration of the Sikhs. Precisely, he wrote

> The refugee problem is assuming gigantic proportions. The only limit that I can see to it is that set by the census reports. According to reports, the movement across the border runs into a lakh or so a day. At Chuharkhana, in the Shaikhupura district, I saw between one *lakh* and a *lakh* and half of Sikhs collected in the town and around it, in the houses, on roofs and everywhere. It was exactly like the *Magh Mela* in Allahabad. It will take 45 trains to move them, even at 4,000 people per train: or, if they are to stay there, they will have to be given 50 tons of *ata* a day. . . I am telling everyone that I do not care how the Sikhs are got rid of as soon as possible. There is still little sign of the 3 *lakhs* Sikhs in Lyallpur moving, but in the end they too will have to go.[6]

The Muslim resolve to denude West Pakistan - West Punjab, North West Frontier Province, Sind and Baluchistan - of the Sikhs to make for a stronger Pakistan, buttressed the conscious resolve of the Sikh leadership for mass migration of the community to India. That was the only wise decision taken by the Sikh leadership during the entire gamut of the last phase of the *Raj*, and implemented, thanks to the intolerance of Pakistani leaders.

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The Boundary Force assembled by the British and the two dominions on two sides of the Punjab proved inadequate to make for orderly migration of displaced persons. In the next six months, over 10 million persons were involved in two way traffic, and a million perished. As against that, Gandhi, as one man Boundary Force, had prevented a mass migration of Hindus and Muslims in two parts of Bengal and Assam.[7] The Punjabis in Calcutta saw Gandhi on August 24, and wanted him to go to East Punjab and exercise his charm there.

Jawaharlal Nehru after his second visit to East Punjab wrote to Gandhi on August 25, 1947, that "mass migrations are taking place on a vast scale" and that "these are largely spontaneous" born out of natural urge in the people "to escape from a dangerous zone". He also averred that Master Tara Singh and Giani Kartar Singh "had been trying to get peace restored." Apportioning the blame, he continued "The wilder elements among the Akalis have 'joined hands with some of the RSS elements."[8]

Gandhi was, however, sore at the mass migration of Hindus and Sikhs from West Punjab, and their endeavours to displace Muslims especially from Delhi and U.P. Jawaharlal Nehru with shoes in his hands in September sought to contain one such mob of Hindu and Sikh refugees from looting the contents of a Muslin shop in Connaught Place, New Delhi. Sardar Patel, however, was blunt and wanted the Muslims in northern India, especially the cow belt, who were foremost in the demand for Pakistan, to cross over Gandhi screeching his teeth, was helpless before Patel. All his ire fell on the Sikhs.

Gandhi met angry Hindu-Sikh refugees in a refugee camp ii Delhi in early September, and was accused of hardness of hear towards them. "He had not suffered, as they had. He had not lost his dear ones, as they had, nor had he, like them, been rendered homeless and penniless." Gandhi implored the refugees not to return evil for evil. He also visited Muslim refugees at Juma Masjid in Delhi and gave them words of consolation. "He was sorry that lives of Muslims should be in danger in Delhi or in any part of India."[9]

Gandhi now started speaking on the subject in his evening prayer meetings. Despite the ongoing violence against Muslims in, inter alia, Eastern U.P., Bihar, Central Provinces, and Bombay, with which the Sikhs had nothing to do, Gandhi concentrated on violence allegedly generating from the Sikhs. He even went to the extent of sequestrating Hindus from the ongoing violence in Delhi and its neighbourhood, and blamed the Sikhs as the sole blot on the fair name of India.

This type of Gandhi's lopsided reading was buttressed by some elements close to him. By the time, Gandhi also reverted to the pet theme of bringing about of rapprochement between the two dominions – India and Pakistan. The wily Hussain Shaheed Suhrawardy, Premier of Bengal at the time of Great Calcutta Killings, joined him.[10] He had his own objectives. Gandhi's evening prayer meetings soon became a forum for regular tirades against the Sikhs and Sikhism.

This had its repercussions on the general attitude of the administration towards the Sikhs, and it had its impact on the Hindus, especially in U.P. and other parts, who looked down upon them.

The Punjab Construction Committee delegation which included Durga Das, on September 20, 1947, suggested to Jawaharlal Nehru that, "The Sikhs should be asked to state categorically

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whether they wished to have a small province of their own in which they would have a majority." The crux of the delegation's suggestion lay in the next sentence, which reads, "If so, the refugees should from now be settled in such a manner as would fulfill this desire of the Sikhs." Jawaharlal Nehru indicated that the previous day he had asked Master Tara Singh, "Whether his community wanted Khalistan (a Sikh State)". Nehru added, "He had never seen Master Tara Singh so crestfallen as on that day. The Sikh leader vehemently protested against any idea of Khalistan and said that the Sikhs, being a very small section of the people of India, would not pick any quarrel with them. They wished to remain citizens of India and live with the Hindus as brothers"[11] on the basis of sovereign equality.

Shortly afterwards, addressing the Press, Master Tara Singh drew attention to the "bogie of a Sikh State in the East Punjab which is being conjured up by the Pakistani propaganda machinery in order to create dissensions between the Hindus and the Sikhs", and said that "Hindus and Sikhs will rise and fall together. Their fates are inextricably linked."[12] Were these words sufficient to satisfy the Hindu Congress leaders?

Nehru, a crafty politician, was certainly not offering Tara Singh the formation of a Sikh state. Hukam Singh is correct when he says that Nehru put forth the proposal in a taunting way, and the objective, as made clear by Durga Das, was to retard the rehabilitation of the Sikhs and confine them to a few districts." Tara Singh, was full of remorse at the mentality behind the wily Brahmin's proposition.

Gandhi's priorities were now perverse. Suhrawardy, the mastermind behind the Great Calcutta Killings was now acting as his emissary to bring about rapprochement between the two dominions. His objective was quite obvious: to prevent interchange of population - the mass of Muslims left over in India who incidentally were in the forefront in the struggle for Pakistan. That was also the purport of Jinnah's inaugural address to the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan on August 11, 1947, when he had obviously disowned the two nation theory and propounded territorial nationalism. That was after Gandhi's heart. He quickly fell into the trap. Suhrawardy now landed in Delhi at the feet of Mahatma to consolidate the Muslim community in India. He, however, gave his objective as one of bringing about reconciliation between the two dominions.

Suhrawardy, with Gandhi's blessings, held discussions with Pakistani leaders at Lahore and wrote to Gandhi on September 21, 1947.

I am glad to find that the two (Sir Ghulam Mohammad and Liaquat Ali Khan) agree with the 'contrition', no interchange of population (except for Punjab where it has taken place, and no power on earth can stop it. I shall write later about it, as *I think Hindus and Muslims can get together*, *the Sikhs appear to be impossible*), and a determined effort to get back the refugees (except for the Punjab Sikhs).[14]

Suhrawardy and his cohorts in order to prevent the mass migration of Muslims from Northern India especially the cow belt worked upon, if that was needed at all, Gandhi's anti-Sikh phobia. These elements also exploited Hindu Congress leaders guilt complex for bringing about partition and their desire for bringing about unity at the top in Defence, Foreign Affairs, and Communications between the two sovereign dominions. This was reflected in V. P. Menon's article published in the daily *Statesman* of October 21, 1947.

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The Sikhs were now at the receiving end in both India and Pakistan. Gandhi lashed out against them charging left and right. The Sikh way of life, symbols especially *Kirpan*, and Sikh doctrines came in for assault. For instance, on October 2, 1947, Gandhi spoke against the Sikhs keeping *Kirpan*, and said, "The way people put out their *Kirpans* these days is an act of barbarism."[15] It was mainly because of Gandhi's pressure that, at the instance of the Government of India, the new Punjab Governor, Sir Chandu Lal Trivedi, on October 10, 1947, got issued a confidential policy letter to all Deputy Commissioners and Superintendents of Police in East Punjab. It was issued by the Sikh Home Secretary over the head of Sikh Home Minister, Swaran Singh, and without a discussion in the Cabinet. It said "The Sikhs were a lawless people and were thus a menace to the law abiding Hindus in the province." It called upon them to take "special measures" against the Sikhs. It surmised that "The motive which actuated Sikhs on a course of lawlessness were desire for women and loot."[16]

By end-October, one of Gandhi's confidants who had been to Lahore apprised him that "The lives of the Sikhs were more in demand than those of the Hindus."[17] Even Pakistani Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan, who was "full of praise" for Gandhi and Nehru for saving the Muslim life in Delhi, candidly admitted the failure of Pakistani leaders to achieve corresponding results, "for the simple reason that the Sikhs. . . had so enraged the Muslim population that any attempt to interfere with their determination to retaliate would have created misunderstanding about the Muslim leaders."[18] Further that, "The Pakistani Government would be prepared to let the Hindu refugees come back and resume business, but the Sikhs could not be permitted to return 'at least for a few years'."[19]

These blunt but frank reports about the sad plight of the Sikhs in Pakistan especially when the East Punjab government had already branded them as criminals, lawless elements and debauches, encouraged Gandhi to continue his onslaught on the Sikhs with a greater vehemence.

Gandhi in the next couple of months continually attacked the Sikhs for holding the sword. On November 19, he went to the extent of saying that the Privy Council Judgment that the *Kirpan* meant sword of any size, now that Hindus had come to power, had become defunct.[20] He also frequently talked about the drinking habits of the Sikhs, as if no liquor was consumed in Hindu provinces, and of the Sikhs selling *kabab* and other flesh food in Chandni Chowk, Delhi, to the grave annoyance of the Hindus.

The raiders' attack on Kashmir valley and accession of Maharaja of Kashmir to the Indian Union posed the first test for this great apostle of non-violence to live up to his preachings. One could recall with advantage, Gandhis "open letter" to "every Briton"[21] in mid-1940 when Britain was bracing herself to face a German invasion, and his addressing the European Powers in his weekly, *Harijan* of June 22, 1940,[22] advising Britain and Europe to answer Hitler's violence with non-violence.

Gandhi was also talking high of his superior weapon of nonviolence from April 1947 to Hindu-Sikh refugees who were victims of Muslim mob fury in Rawalpindi division and other places. One naturally thought that he would offer a non-violent solution to the Kashmir issue and raise his moral stature. But no! He proved to be a false prophet. Seervai has documented that non-violence with him was a political weapon.[23] He sanctioned India's use of armed forces and laid the foundations of Kashmir problem which continues to haunt the sub-continent till today.

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Kashmir valley was saved not by Gandhi's non-violence, but by the heroism and bravery with the help of sword and other armed weapons of the Sikh soldiers who were the first to be sent to Srinagar to face the Pakistani raiders, supported by Pakistani soldiers. The whole nation was praise for the performance of the Sikh soldiers but that did not soften Gandhi. He not only refused to acknowledge the dent, if not the reversal, in his policy of non-violence, but also continued to mount a vicious attack on Sikhism.

Sant Singh former MLA(Central) in a long letter to Gandhi protested against his campaign of vilification of the Sikh community and misinterpretation of the Sikh doctrines. Gandhi mentioned of the letter in his prayer meeting of November 24, 1947, and justified his continued diatribe which he said was for "ridding the great and brave community of madness, drunkenness and all vices that flow from it. Let them not be fooled by the Privy Council Judgement if it means that *Kirpan* is a sword of any length."[24] That, Gandhi had lost his objectivity and balance was clear from the fact that even after the beginning of the Kashmir war, he pleaded for going back of refugees with dignity and honour.

Guru Nanak's birthday celebrations at Delhi on November 28, 1947, provided Gandhi another opportunity to have a dig at the Sikhs. In a heavily barricaded *pandal* in what is now known as Gandhi Grounds, the author heard Gandhi to say that if a Sikh was equal to *sava lakh*, literally 1,25,000 persons, a fist strike would be sufficient to kill a man. Why were they taking resort to the sword? What he was seeking to drive at was that the Sikh claim of one Sikh being equal to a legion was untrue.

On December 4, Gandhi again spoke on the Sikhs and Sikhism. He said, he was glad to hear that Master Tara Singh had compared Sikhs and Hindus to the nail and nail-bed, and that no one could separate the two.[25] Gandhi mischievously added, who was Guru Nanak, if not a Hindu? Further that,

> Even Guru Nanak never said that he was not a Hindu nor did any other Guru. . . . . It cannot be said that Sikhism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism are separate religions. All these four faiths and their offshoots are one. *Hinduism is an ocean into which all the rivers run. It can absorb Islam and Christianity and all other religions and only then can it become the ocean.*[16]

Gandhi's objective was to make Hinduism that ocean. That would justify his being acclaimed as father of "our nation" - a vast Hindu ocean, encompassing the Muslims and the Christians, apart from the Sikhs, Buddhists and the Jains. Pertinently, Mahavir Tyagi said in the CA "We don't believe in discarding minorities or finishing them or killing them enmasse, because we are believers of conversion, and we are confident of being able to convert them, one and all, to our side."[27] Also, whenever Dr. B. R. Ambedkar mentioned the word minorities in the CA, the Hindu-Congressites cried in unison, "There are no minorities in India now."

The Akalis continued to ignore Gandhi's diatribe, and in early December 1947 they extended their wholehearted support to Congress in all political matters.[28] But Gandhi's continuous outpourings were rattling the Sikh mind. On December 24, 1947, some enterprising Sikhs took to him a bundle of press clippings of his anti-Sikh pronouncements, to impress upon him the enormity of the pain and damage he was causing the community.[29]

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The most quotable quote frequently talked about during this period was Gandhi's pronouncement in one of his prayer meetings. *Mai ne shuna hai*, *aaj*, *Ballimaron mein*, *ek Mushalman bhayee kele ke chhilke se phishal kar gir gaya. Woh chhilka yaroor kissi Sheekh ne phenka hoga* - "I have heard, today, in Ballimaran (off Chandni Chowk, Delhi) a Muslim brother slipped from the peel of a banana and fell. That peel must have been thrown by a Sikh".

Gandhi really was out of his mind when talking about the Sikhs. Instead of making amends, in his usual style he laughed at the anger of the Sikhs. He did not deny the veracity of the press reports, but added that "As the Sikhs were a virile *race*, he certainly expected more from them" and that "whatever he had said, he had said as a staunch friend of the Sikhs."[30] The Sikhs said they did not need such a friend, but he had imposed himself as one!

The sharp differences in the Sikh perception and that of Hindu Congress leaders was brought into sharp focus when a Sikh deputation led by Giani Kartar Singh placed certain points for consideration of Dr. Rajendra Prasad, President of the CA on January 21, 1948. It called on Gandhi the same evening.

Giani Kartar Singh put forth the Sikh case comprehensively to Rajendra Prasad. He began with a pleading for securing the status of free zone like the one given to Jerusalem for Nankana Sahib in Pakistan, and pleaded for exchange of a village to bring the historic Gurdwara of Kartarpur-Ravi to the Indian side. He recounted the Congress pledge not to do anything on the minority question without their consent, and wanted that "The political position of the Sikhs should be secured." He put forth that "The districts of Rohtak and Gurgaon did not actually belong to the Punjab as the language is that of Delhi and their life and culture are also more like Delhi than of Punjab", and wanted these to be attached to Delhi. He asked for "a substantial share in the political rights and administration of the province" of East Punjab in the light of the Muslims getting Pakistan, the Hindus the rest of India. "The question of the political position of the Sikhs in the Punjab and in India should also be taken up and decided upon, otherwise there will be discontent and it will not be possible to restore confidence."[31]

Later in the evening, the delegation including Giani Kartar Singh called on Gandhi who had just broken his fast protesting against the Hindus for joining hands with the Sikhs for, what he called, a uprooting the Muslims in Delhi.[32]

Gandhi told the deputation,

> I read your Granth Saheb. But I do not do so to please you. Nor shall I seek your permission to do so. *But the Guru has not said anywhere that you must grow beards*, *carry kirpan and so on*.[33]

Gandhi wanted the Sikhs to disown Guru Gobind Singh, cast off *Kirpan* and other symbols of the Khalsa, shave off their hair and merge into the ocean of Hinduism! That was virtually his last testament about the Sikhs, to the nation of which he was the father. It made the Sikh leadership to sit up and think.

Around that time there was a bomb blast at the site of his prayer meeting. Gandhi, without any verification or an iota of evidence, and without thinking for a moment, said that, that must be the work of a Sikh!

Gandhi's end came on January 30, 1948, when Nathu Ram Godse, a RSS worker put an end to his agony from a pointblank range. By that time Nehru and Patel were on verge of a breaking point, and the same evening Gandhi had called them both to arbitrate in their growing schism. He was also thinking of dissolving the Congress which had functioned as an over-arching body for disparate elements in the struggle for freedom, and for reconstruction of India from the village level. Godse unintentionally did greatest service both to Gandhi and the Congress, and, unfortunately, prevented polarization of forces of the left of the center, and the right led by Nehru and Patel respectively. Lord Mountbatten made Nehru and Patel to embrace each other and bring about a facile reconciliation.

The government at first withheld the news about the identity of the killer and the general impression was that it might be the work of a Sikh. Hukam Singh at Kapurthala felt the incipient violence that lay in store for the Sikhs, if it were so.[34] The author, at the time at Ludhiana, felt the atmosphere surcharged with violence. That was probably the position all over Punjab and outside for the Sikhs. Shortly afterwards, the killers identity was disclosed; it cooled tempers.

Before proceeding further, it would be apt to make an assessment of Gandhi's viewpoint on the place of the Sikhs in the Indian polity.

Gandhi, right from his introduction to the Sikh affairs from the Nankana Saheb tragedy in 1921 down to 1948, believed the Sikhs to be Hindus, and was not reconciled to their assertion of distinct identity. Though he had been bluntly told in 1921 itself, that his reference to the Sikhs as Hindus was most offensive to them, he never desisted from causing offence or rubbing salt into their wounds. He earnestly wanted the Sikhs to disown Guru Gobind Singh and the Khalsa way of living, and merge themselves within the Hindu fold. At least, he regarded that as part of his mission. He was never considerate to the Sikh susceptibilities, or their resentment at the hurt caused to them by his continuous vituperations. He never made any amends. Aurangzeb on receipt of *Zafarnamah* from Guru Gobind Singh was full of penitence at the wrong done to him. Gandhi was never in penitence and never went on a fast or resort to any of other numerous devices to expiate for his continuously hurting the feelings of the Sikhs. In the words of Nirad C. Chaudhuri, "Gandhi had the capacity for prevarication of a Hindu Bania and Hindu Guru combined and like both he would think that what he desired must of necessity be right."[35] So far as the Sikhs are concerned, Gandhi was intolerant, capricious and a hard core fanatic who worked for annihilation of Sikhism. He was worse than Aurangzeb. It was not for nothing that E.M.S. Namboodiripad later called Gandhi a Hindu religious fundamentalist.

Gandhi could show accommodation to the followers of Islam and Christianity which he regarded as religions distinct from Hinduism, but none to Sikhism which, he was emphatic, formed part of the Hindu system and had to be absorbed within the fold of Hinduism. He had earlier envisioned that Hindus and Sikhs would fall upon each other once the Muslims, as an object of hostility, were out of the way. [36] Because of his unrestrained tongue-lashing at the Sikhs, he had been a success in creating a state of hiss against them among the top Hindu Congress leaders. He had also sufficiently vitiated the general atmosphere and created groundswell for Hindu-Sikh misunderstanding.

The crisis of confidence that emerged among the Sikhs on the news of Gandhi's assassination, especially in the context of his unrelenting hostility towards independent entity of

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Sikhism, constituted a watershed in the Sikh attitude towards the Hindus, and put them to serious thinking as to their place in the Indian polity. One offshoot of that was that the Sikhs completely dissociated themselves from the Hindus and kept aloof from the manslaughter of the Muslims that went on in India in the name of Hindu-Muslim communal tension, conflict and riots, and which became a regular feature of the Indian polity, despite the bookish commitment to secularism later proclaimed by the Indian leaders. From early 1948 onwards, the Sikhs were not involved on either side in the ongoing Hindu-Muslim conflict; both the Hindus and the Muslims respected the Sikh non-involvement. That later constituted one of the agent provocateurs to Indira Gandhi in her launching her Sikh war in the eighties.

Now, we may have a broad look at the demographic revolution that was taking place in East Punjab.

Hindus and Sikhs were driven out from West Punjab and NWFP, and Muslims from East Punjab except for certain pockets.

The authorities in East Punjab in September 1947 took a calculated decision to resettle the Sikh-dominant displaced persons from Canal Colonies of Lyallpur, Montgomery and Sheikhupura districts in the area of Jalandhar Division wherefrom they had originally migrated to reclaim those areas.[37] The Hindus by and large moved over to trans-Ghaggar area in east Punjab besides moving in large numbers to Delhi, Eastern U.P. and other parts of India. The Sikhs too moved to other parts of India but broadly concentrated on resettling themselves in cis-Ghaggar area of the Punjab.

The demographic change gave a decisive edge in East Punjab to 28 percent Hindus vis a vis 13 percent Sikhs in undivided Punjab. For the first time after more than a millennium, Hindus became a majority in East Punjab as then constituted. But the Sikhs, because of their concentration in cis-Ghaggar area, for the first time in their history constituted a majority in a compact area of East Punjab States and eight Districts of Punjab viz - Gurdaspur, Amritsar, Kapurthala, Jalandhar, Hoshiarpur, Ludhiana, Ferozepur and Ambala.

Significantly, Dr. Ambedkar in February 1948 observed to a Sikh delegation which included Ajit Singh Sarhadi that they were the greatest gainers because of the partition. He went on to say:

> In the entire United Punjab, you were 13 percent. You were a minority at the mercy of the two communities, Hindus and Muslims, even in the province of Punjab where you were concentrated. You played an equal role with the other two communities, numerically much bigger than you, because of your inherent strength, dynamism, drive and hard work. But politically you were no-where. Partition has been tragic indeed for the country causing material loss and tremendous human sufferings, but today after this migration, though forced, you Sikhs have been the greatest gainers politically and would be the greatest gainers economically hereafter. Your community today, from all that I hear a-id see, has come to be in majority in the six Sikh states with an area of about 12 thousand square miles. You are likely to be in majority or are already in majority, however small it may be, in 8 districts of Jalandhar Division. Here is an area of nearly fifty thousand square miles where you will be in majority in a short time to come when the conditions stabilise and this forced exchange of population is complete. Your community for once in its history of more than 400 years has a 'Homeland' which you can call your own. *Hereafter you have a territory with majority. You have got a religion, common bond amongst yourselves and by all canons of nationhood, you are a people having a*

homeland and yet you tell me that you have suffered terribly. History depicts that sufferings have been always undergone for such objectives. *How long would any party in India be able to crush you or treat you badly, when you have got a territory of your own which on the admitted and accepted principles of self-determination can opt out if the exigencies of time and situation demand.*[38]

One tends to agree with Hukam Singh that Dr. Ambedkar's analysis of the Sikh situation was shared by other members of the Cabinet who must have discussed the emergent situation to formulate policies and attitudes towards the Sikhs.[39]

Another factor which decisively influenced the Hindu national leadership was its taking malicious note of the Sikh predominance in the Army. Around this time, Sardar Patel got alarmed when he found six Sikh Generals out of eight at a parade at Ambala Cantt. Apparently perturbed, in wry humour he said, "Why should the Sikhs grumble. They dominate the Indian army and can capture power."[40] An indirect impact of this realisation was the conscious decision taken around this time, not to ever make a Sikh an Army Chief.[41]

The Sikh leadership was still thinking, how to safeguard their culture and identity, that the Hindu Congress leaders took a calculated decision to confront and contain them. The first salvo was fired through the Hindu Congress leaders dominating the Jalandhar Municipal Committee when they decided by Resolution No. 81 of February 1948 to introduce Hindi as the medium of instruction in the schools maintained by the Committee. This constituted the first step in their diabolical move to deny their mother tongue, the Punjabi language. Gandhi a decade earlier had wanted the Sikhs to discard the Gurmukhi script in favour of Devnagri.[42] His followers now went a step ahead and sought to throw the baby alongwith the bath water! They ware oblivious of the fact that in the 1941 and 1921 census, 9655 and 9988 persons of every 1000 had returned Punjabi as their mother tongue.[43]

This type of fanaticism and falsification of one's language at the time was not confined to India alone. The Pakistanis - Punjabis and Muhajirs - too sought to impose Urdu language on the people of East Bengal to deculturise them. That led to violent protest by students of Dacca University on February 21, 1948, when a number of them were fired upon and killed. That marked the beginning of assertion of their identity by the people of East Bengal vis a vis Punjabi-Muhajir dominated administration in Pakistan. Eventually it led to national self-assertion in the form of emergence of sovereign Bangla Desh in 1971. In East Punjab, however a section of Punjabi Hindus, an infinitesimal minority as we shall see, was inveigled to seek wider identity with coreligionists of Hindi belt to mount cultural offensive against the Sikhs.

The decision by Jalandhar Municipal Committee was not an act in isolation or a casual decision, but had the tacit approval, if not the active encouragement, of the Congress leadership. The Sikh leaders were partially true when they pointed the accusing finger at Arya Samajists, but the members of Jalandhar Municipal Committee were acting as members of Indian National Congress following Gandhian brand of truth and secularism.

Since the Arya Samajists, representing the traditional materialistic middle class or traditional Hindu ethos, controlled the Hindu denomi national educational institutions and the powerful Hindu vernacular press, apart from providing leadership to the provincial Congress, they were prone to have an influence disproportionate to their intrinsic strength. In what was subsequently marked as Punjabi-speaking region, Arya Samajists constituted slightly over 5 percent of Punjabi region

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population. The fact that both the groups in the Congress at macro level depended upon Arya Samajists in East Punjab, it gave them a greater potentiality for mischief. It also gave respectability to Hindu chauvinism to fall within the framework of Congress brand of secularism.

It was significant that on the question of denial of their mother tongue, a blatant but provocative lie, by a section of Punjabi Hindus, neither Patel nor Nehru ever advised them to abide by the truth and seek a non-sectarian solution to their problems.[44]

Basically, the Arya Samajists were seized of a feeling of insecurity which all the more made them obstinate and aggressive.

Another facet of aggressiveness of Congressite Arya Samajists was the powerful Hindu vernacular press resuming vicious campaign against the Sikh aspirations. It, firstly, started gloating over East Punjab having become a Hindu majority province for the first time in known history. They sought to link the fate of Punjabi Hindus with that of their co-religionists from Hindi belt who, in their quest to have Hindi language replace English as the national language, were in an expansionist mood, and were in a mood to devour the other akin languages to inflate the number of Hindi protagonists.

Secondly, it wanted suppression of all, what it termed, communalisms. The touchstone applied was that since Hindus were in majority, all what they advocated constituted the national mainstream, as against the Sikhs who were in a minority and who, per force, should be made to toe the line of the majority community. The vernacular press dug out old writings about 'Azad Punjab' and 'Sikh state' raised by the Sikh leaders with active connivance and encouragement of the Congress leaders to counterpoise the demand for Pakistan, and started reproducing selective extracts to emphasise that what really the Sikhs now wanted in India was a 'Sikh state' or Sikh majority area[45] which automatically would jeopardise the position of Hindus, the ruling race.[46]

The intensification of this type of feelings had its impact in the upsurge of communal feelings in the Hindus in civil services to which they had been recruited on communal basis and were predominant in various departments in East Punjab.[47]

The beginnings of Congressite Arya Samajist onslaught in February 1948 in East Punjab, when hardly had the embers of Gandhi's funeral pyre died down, formed part of a wider plot. The draft constitution circulated by the time incorporated joint electorate and denied weightage for minorities in East Punjab. This was articulated by Jawaharlal Nehru in public speeches. It came as a bolt from the blue to the Sikh leaders who regarded the new Congress stance running counter to the assurances given to them at the time of Lahore Congress in 1929. They were forced to resort to counter mobilisation.

Cut to the quick. Master Tara Singh considered the Hindu assertion of communal majority as a threat to the very existence of the Sikhs as an independent, vibrant, community. This forced him to drastically change his stance and declare on February 25, 1948, "We have a culture different from the Hindus. Our culture is Gurmukhi culture and our literature is also in the Gurmukhi script". He asked for the formation of Punjabi *suba*, a Punjabi speaking state, as a purely linguistic unit, and added, "We want to have a province where we can safeguard our culture and our tradition." He made it clear that he was not asking for a sovereign independent state, but as part of the federal unit. He asserted, "I want the right of self-determination for Panth in matters - religious,

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social, political and others. If to ask for the existence of Panth is communalism, then I am a communalist, and am willing to face repression." The height of his agony was expressed by his cryptic statement, "If the Panth is dead, I have no desire to live."[48] Tara Singh's was an emotional response, having fought shoulder to shoulder with national leaders of Congress in attaining freedom.

Giani Kartar Singh, a shrewd tactician, and then President of Shiromani Akali Dal attributed the Congressite Arya Samajist offensive to the deep malaise that had seized the Hindu mind, especially since their seizure of absolute power, on the partition of the country. He also took into view the schism between Patel and Nehru, and hoped to attain the Sikh objectives of a secure future in India as part of the national mainstream by posing a challenge to the Hindu national leaders to rise to their avowed commitment to secularism.

The Shiromani Akali Dal on March 16, 1948, in a meeting unanimously decided to shun political activity and henceforth confine itself to religious and cultural uplift of the community.[49] Before merging its political entity in the Congress, the Akali Dal adopted a vital resolution which spelt out the Sikh aspirations within a broader Punjabi context.

> As the Congress is pledged to create linguistic states and the creation of a Punjabi speaking state will fulfill wholly the aspirations of the Sikhs as well as of all secular-minded Punjabis, this meeting unanimously calls upon the Akal i members of the Punjab legislature to merge in the Congress Party in order to strengthen the secular forces, especially after the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi at the hands of a member of an avowedly communal organisation.

Dr. Gopal Singh would make us believe that under instructions from Baldev Singh, all references to Punjabi speaking state were excluded from the published version which laid emphasis on the assurances extended to the Sikhs by top Congress leaders at the time of Lahore Congress in 1929.[50]

These decisions were subject to ratification by the general body of Shiromani Akali Dal which, however, refused ratification on May 31,1948. Meanwhile, Akali members of state and central legislature on direction joined the Congress. This did not apply to Hukam Singh and Bhopinder Singh Man elected to the Constituent Assembly in April 1948.[51] They constituted representatives of Akali Dal or of the Sikh Community in the Constituent Assembly.

At micro level, the District Board Jalandhar in reaction to Jalandhar Municipal Committee's resolution of last month, resolved in March 1948 that the medium of instruction of all schools maintained by it would be Punjabi in Gurmukhi script. Master Tara Singh in his Presidential Address at the Second Annual Sikh Students Federation Conference on April 24, 1948, cautioned the Hindus against efforts to eliminate "consciousness and respect" of the Sikhs - "your own military wing." He appealed to them to rise above the narrow considerations and not to impede the creation of an Indian national entity.[52]

The Sikhs now came in for mixed treatment.

The formation of Patiala and East Punjab States Union (PEPSU), a conglomeration of states in East Punjab, a Sikh majority territorial unit, on May 5, 1948, with Maharaja of Patiala as *Rajpramukh* or head, elated the Sikhs.

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As against that, the setting up by the President of the CA in early June 1948 of Linguistic Provinces Commission headed by Dr. S. K. Dhar, a retired judge of Allahabad High Court to go into the question of formation of new provinces of Andhra, Karnataka, Kerala and Maharashtra, and excluding the formation of Punjabi speaking province from within its purview, was indicative of evil intentions. The terms of reference seemed invidious and came in for severe criticism at the hands of the Sikhs.

Side by side, the announcement in June 1948 by East Punjab government of the language formulae permitting parents the choice of Hindi or Punjabi as medium of instruction in first two classes, and learning the other language from 3rd class, was indicative of mischievous intentions of the politically dominant section of the Punjabi Hindus. This formulae was announced notwithstanding the admission of Gopi Chand Bhargava, Premier of Punjab on June 1, that the mother tongue of the people of East Punjab was Punjabi.[53] Following the announcement of new language policy, the Commissioner, Jalandhar Division, suspended the resolutions adopted by Jalandhar Municipal Committee and District Board Jalandhar in February and March last about the medium of instruction.

These left the Sikhs dazed. However, inaugurating the Patiala and East Punjab States Union on July 15,1948, Sardar Patel declared it as "Homeland of Sikhs". This was more reflective of the guilt complex in view of Patel's candid admission that "Master Tara Singh had been a life long companion and a comrade in the fight for freedom against the foreign rule."[54]

The Sikhs were pleased at this belated recognition of their aspirations. But their elation was shortlived. Differences cropped up on the very first day over the question of formation of a popular government in PEPSU and the right of Shiromani Rayasti Akali Dal, representing the major political constituent in PEPSU to lead the government. The Hindus opposed the appointment of a Sikh to head the interim arrangement.

The Jalandhar and Delhi based Hindu vernacular press as also Durga Das of the *Hindustan Times*, then serving as mouthpiece of the Congress, carried a persistent campaign decrying the concept of Sikh Homeland as dangerous to Hindu community's vital interests.

The sort of discriminatory treatment to which the Sikhs were being subjected to, was made clear by the language policy framed by the Government of India in mid August 1948. This reads,

> The principle that a child should be instructed in the early stage of his education through the medium of his mother tongue has been accepted by the Government. All educationists agree that any departure from this principle is bound to be harmful to the child and, therefore, to the interests of the country.[55]

This was in sharp contrast to the policy framed in June last by East Punjab Government. Why departure in East Punjab, and encourage cleavage among the Hindus and the Sikhs?

The Sikhs feeling of pique at the situation was expressed in Shiromani Akali Dal's resolution of October 25, 1948, which insisted on separate electorate for the Sikhs in legislatures, to be reviewed after 10 years, in view of "the aggressive communal mentality brought into play particularly during the last 10 months by the majority community".[56]

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By the autumn of 1948, it was obvious that the Central Congress leaders were bent upon widening the schism between the Hindus and the Sikhs by persistently ignoring the latter. The Sikhs by now had lost their privilege of *sunwai* i.e. being heard with an open mind to have the injustices rectified and genuine grievances removed.

The first victim of this state of affairs was the 10-man subcommittee's recommendations in November for reservation of seats for religious minorities in East Punjab, with some of the members urging grant of weightage to the Sikhs. These were turned down by the Minority Committee of the CA which included Jawaharlal. Nehru, Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajendra Prasad and B.R. Ambedkar.[57] The 13 demands propounded by all the Sikh members except Pratap Singh Kairon of East Punjab Assembly[58] in mid-November 1948 asked for certain safeguards, failing which for formation of a new province of seven districts, viz., Gurdaspur, Amritsar, Jalandhar, Ferozepur, Ludhiana, Hoshiarpur and Ambala.[59] These were mischievously equated by the Congress leaders to Muslim League's 14 points of June 1927, in the process equating League's demand for a separate Muslim State to the Sikhs plea for reorganisation of Punjab on linguistic basis as part and parcel of the Indian Union. The fact that the Sikhs were even willing to forego the demand for Punjabi speaking state on purely linguistic basis in return for protection and safeguards from a communal majority made no difference to Gandhiites who were bent upon denying them a place under the sun.

The Congressite-Arya Samajist press was emphatic that under no circumstances would Punjabi Hindus accept Sikh domination. Master Tara Singh suggested a rational way out when he said, "The remedy for the state of mutual suspicion lies in the fact that means shall be found so that *neither community remains under the other's domination. It should be a sort of equal partnership.*" He continued, "We have not lost our faith in the non-Punjabi Hindus and we have expressed our confidence in the Center. Why should Punjabi Hindus lose confidence in the Sikhs? The Central government will naturally be dominated by the Hindus."[60] The quest for 'equal partnership' constituted the kernel of Sikh politics. But the Punjabi Arya Samajists who believed themselves to belong to the ruling race were not amused.

Baldev Singh's plea to Patel to accommodate the Sikhs "within the basic principles laid down by the Congress" and "consistent with Congress ideals" fell on deaf ears.[61] Patel put Baldev Singh on the defensive conveying him the general impression about his (Baldev Singh's) identity of outlook to that of Tara Singh, patted him for espousing the nationalist views and held that "the Constitution cannot be disfigured"[62] by their owning up earlier Congress commitments. This was what later Nehru meant when the said that "time has changed".

The Dhar Commission in its report submitted on eve of the Congress Session in December 1948, while rejecting the demand, for the time being, for formation of linguistic provinces of Andhra, Karnataka, Kerala and Maharashtra gave an uncharitable kick to the Sikhs when it said, "The formation of linguistic provinces is sure to give rise to a demand for the separation of other linguistic groups elsewhere. Claims have already been made by Sikhs, Jats and others and these demands will in course of time be intensified and become live issues if once the formation of linguistic provinces is decided upon."[63] It impishly treated the demand for linguistic reorganisation of Punjab as a Sikh demand and logically spelt out the repercussions of any linguistic reorganisation in the south to its application in the north.

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Justice Dhar came in for severe criticism at the hands of Congress President, Pattabhi Sitarammayah, who was a protagonist for creation of Andhra Pradesh. He, at Jaipur Session (December 1948), had the Congress to appoint a three-member, JVP Committee, consisting of Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhabhai Patel and himself, to review the matter.

By the time, the Sikhs were exercised over some of the constitutional problems and their feelings ran high. The Shiromani Akali Dal announced its decision to hold a conference at Delhi on February 19-20, 1949, to voice its serious concern at the turn of events. Sardar Patel who had cowed down the rulers of princely states and others, was encouraged by Nehru to confront the Sikhs. Patel conveyed to Nehru on February 9, 1949, that "we shall not allow the Akali conference to be held in *Delhi in any shape or form*."[64] Durlabh Singh's *Ranjit Nagara*, Urdu daily, main organ of the Sikhs in Delhi was closed down. The public meeting convened by Delhi Provincial Congress on February 6, and addressed by Ishar Singh Majhail, Partap Singh Kairon, Giani Zail Singh, Gurmukh Singh Musafir and Dr. Lehna Singh to counter the Akali move, however, proved a flop.[65]

Under intense pressure from Baldev Singh and Giani Kartar Singh who wanted to avoid a crisis, Akali Dal Working Committee on February 10, to avoid loss efface, decided to convene instead a Shahidi Diwan (martyrs conference) on February 20, (to commemorate the anniversary of Nankana Sahib tragedy) within the premises of Gurdwara Rakab Ganj, near Central Secretariat, New Delhi. That might have worked. But Nehru, the following day, pinning his letter to a talk he had with Maharaja Yadavendra Singh of Patiala that day, underlined to Patel that Tara Singh, Giani Kartar Singh and their supporter Baldev Singh were working on the same wavelength and urged him "for urgent action" before the conference, "lest the situation became worse."[68]

Nehru was successful in his objective to bring about a clash of wills between Patel and the Sikhs. Under orders of Union Home Ministry, Master Tara Singh, as also a number of the members of Akali Working Committee, were taken off the railway train at Narela Railway Station in Delhi territory. They were taken into custody under the old and musty Bengal Regulation III of 1818 (under which Tilak and Lajpat Rai were taken into custody by the British in 1907), on the eve of the Conference. Tara Singh was sent to Benaras jail. This was the first arrest of Master Tara Singh in free India, and that too to prevent him from holding a religious congregation inside a Gurdwara!

The martyrdom *diwan* was duly held and addressed inter alia by Ajit Singh Sarhadi who felt that Baldev Singh "seemed to have no say for the decisions of the Centre."[67] This started a witchhunt of Akali workers all over East Punjab. It went on for some time and the Sikhs were arrested in hundreds. The Akalis held Diwans all over the province to highlight the government high-handedness.

The fact that the Akalis were not in the wrong registered itself on some Congressite Sikhs as well. For instance, Sardul Singh Caveeshar wrote to Patel in April 1949, "I have studied the whole case very carefully. I would not be surprised if the Courts acquit these people." Since "the Akali leaders have officially declared that they had no intention to defy the law," and Punjab government had declared that "the speeches of Master Tara Singh were not actionable", he urged Patel to withdraw the cases, release Tara Singh and restore peace.[68]

Caveeshar also highlighted Government's high-handedness for having "completely ignored Masterji's party in the formation of the Patiala Ministry." He went on. "The Akali party in the Punjab States was the strongest party, stronger than even the Congress party, when it is ignored

heartburning is natural." As such Tara Singh "has a genuine grouse against the Government" and "his anger against us is not without foundation." He ended his plea to Patel by saying that Delhi Case and Tara Singh's detention "are doing more harm than good", and unnecessarily vitiating the government's position in the Sikh mind.[69]

All this fell on deaf ears. Meanwhile, Patel developed personal animus against the Akali group functioning within the Congress party.

Giani Kartar Singh joined hands with Bhim Sen Sachar in East Punjab Assembly and on April 6, 1949, they toppled Premier Gopi Chand Bhargava, aligned with Patel at macro level. The induction of Bhim Sen Sachar as Premier was dramatised by his proceeding against the Congressite steel black marketeers which was interpreted as an effort to smash Patel group in East Punjab.[70] Patel had already overruled the inclusion of Giani Kartar Singh in the Sachar Ministry for what he regarded as the latter's, malfeasance towards him.[71] His ire now fell on the Sikhs who earned his unremitting hostility which was soon reflected in the CA proceedings and otherwise.

The convention of the Sikhs from all walks of life held in Amritsar in April 1949 condemned the arrest of Akali leaders and demanded the creation of Punjabi speaking state purely on linguistic basis. The area was not defined. The resolution later adopted by Akali Dal indicated that it was not aiming at Sikh majority but wherein Hindus and Sikhs could coexist on basis of equality.[72]

With Akali leaders behind the bars, the Hindu Congress leadership struck decisive blows at the Sikhs. The Hindu members of the CA were seized of the spirit of revivalism which was reflected in their new aggressiveness in 1949. They openly disowned for what they had stood for, during the freedom struggle and reversed the decisions earlier taken by them to the disadvantage of the minorities.

To begin with, the JVP Committee on linguistic reorganisation in its report, accepted by Congress Working Committee in April 1949, recommended the immediate formation of Andhra province and to postpone for a few years the formation of other provinces in the south. As for Justice Dhar's apprehensions about its repercussions in the north, it asserted unequivocally,

> We are clearly of the opinion that no question of rectification of boundaries in the provinces of Northern India should be raised at the present moment, *whatever the merits of such a proposal might be*.[73]

This part of the report certainly had the Nehruvian tinge in it.

If Dhar looked at the demand for Punjab speaking state as a Sikh demand, Nehru and following him Patel delinked the linguistic reorganisation in the south to the one in the north, and not to agree to what they termed "rectification of boundaries" in the north, irrespective of the merits of such a proposal.

There were two reasons for that from Nehru's viewpoint. Firstly, if Punjab were to be reorganised on linguistic principles, only a few districts of Haryana would need to be delinked from Punjab and these would, ipso facto, call for formation of a Jat province consisting of parts of Haryana and Western U.P. It may be mentioned that before partition, when there was a possibility of the Sikhs throwing in their lot with the Muslim League, a move was afoot for formation of such a

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province. This was not palatable to Brahmin-Bania combination which dominated the Jats of both Western U.P. and Haryana. Also, it would have resulted in the division of U.P. into two, possible three, parts and strike at the roots of the power base of Nehru and of U.P. political coterie which dominated the high echeleons of statecraft at the Centre. That was the crux of the problem. Hence, this section inveigled the ever-willing Punjabi Arya Samajists to confuse and confound the issues by aligning themselves with Hindi-Hindus and disowning the Punjabi language.

Secondly, any reorganisation of Punjab would improve the position of the Sikhs vis a vis the Hindus, the dominant section of which having developed the concept of ruling race was not willing to live on terms of equality with the Sikhs. The formation of Punjabi leaking state would also negate Gandhi's last testament to secure the dissolution of the brotherhood of Khalsa and bring about its absorption into Hinduism, a task as dear to Nehru because of his Gangu Brahmin heritage.

The general bias against the minorities was clearly discernible on the eve of the CA proceedings in May 1949. The CA on August 27-28, 1947, had already abolished separate electorate and weightage for the minorities who retained reservation of seats on the basis of population in joint electorate. By the time of Advisory Committee on Minorities meeting scheduled for May 11, 1949, Patel was openly advocating reversal of earlier decision on reservation of seats. Anglo-Indians and Christians did not want the reservation as it was of no use to them, and Muslims had certain inhibitions as those who disagreed with Patel were told to pack up and go to Pakistan.

Amidst this background, the Sikh members of East Punjab Assembly met on May 10, 1949, and unanimously adopted a four point proposal:

1. The Sikh backward Classes viz Mazhbis, Kabirpanthis, Ramdasias, Baurias, Sikligars etc should be given the same privileges in East Punjab and PEPSU as may be provided for Scheduled Castes;
2. Asked for reservation of seats in East Punjab on population basis with right to contest additional seats;
3. In the provinces other than East Punjab and the Centre where their strength warranted, asked for provision for nomination of Sikh members to legislatures in case they were not elected in adequate strength;
4. The Sikhs will be *prepared to give up reservation in the East Punjab*, *if Sikh and Hindu scheduled castes are lumped together* and seats reserved for them on the strength of their population.[74]

The same day Patel wrote to Nehru that he was not in favour of giving an impression "that the demands of Sikhs have a measure of justification", or that might be construed by the Sikhs as giving them "some sort of assurance for further concessions."[75]

The Advisory Committee on Minorities, the following day, adopted a resolution for abolition of reservations for minorities other than Hindu Scheduled Castes in legislatures. The Sikh demand for lumping together of the Sikh and the Hindu scheduled castes was not agreed to. Instead Patel offered to accept four Sikh scheduled castes of Mazhbis, Kabirpanthis, Ramdasias and Sikligars, out of the total of 31 scheduled castes, and that too only in East Punjab, for being granted the facilities extended to Hindu scheduled castes.

A deputation of Sikh legislators of Punjab Assembly led by Giani Kartar Singh called on Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Patel and Nehru separately, to press for lumping together of the Sikh and the

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Hindu scheduled castes. It drew a blank. Nehru point-blank told Giani Kartar Singh to take the concessions being offered on four Sikh scheduled castes as the ultimate price being offered for the Sikh's contribution to the freedom struggle! When reminded of the Congress pledges of 1929, 1946 and 1947, Nehru without blinking his eyelids said that those were part of their ploys and stratagems.[76]

Introducing the report in the CA on May 25, 1949, Patel, with evil in his heart, referred to the absence of "untouchability or any classification or difference of classes" in Sikh religion, gave expression to his atavistic feelings when he called the Sikhs as "the reformed community of Hindus", but asserted that the Sikh scheduled castes were result of "forcible conversions". He added with malice,

> They quote Ranjit Singh who gave such help to the Scheduled Castes. What empire did they hold, the Scheduled Castes? They have been most downtrodden people, absolute dust with dust. . . . That is what the Scheduled Castes are. They are not the people who keep *Kirpans*. They are a different lot.

He went on to add,

> The Sikhs are suffering from fear complex. *They feel that converts to Sikhism would go back to Hindu fold* if their four classes are not included. Though the Sikh religion does not recognise any class distinction but as their representatives have asked for inclusion of four castes in the list of Hindus Scheduled Castes, the majority community as measure of its generosity to create a sense of confidence into the minorities should not grudge to agree to this concession.[77]

Hukam Singh on the other hand pointed out that reservations for Scheduled Castes were because they were backward socially, economically and politically and not because they were a religious minority. He also emphasised that "What we require is pure nationalism and not any counterfeit of it", which the majority community was reflecting, and causing fears in the minorities. He highlighted that "the Sikhs have certain fears as regards their language, their script and also about the services."[77a] He mentioned that the number of Sikhs in the army was deliberately being reduced.

As the Sikhs were under pressure in the CA, the Congressite Arya Samajists in East Punjab struck another blow. This took the form of a resolution by the Punjab University Senate on June 9, 1949, rejecting Punjabi as medium of instruction though. Sarhadi would make us believe, the Sikhs members were willing to accept Devnagri besides Gurmukhi as its scripts.[78] In view of the Hindu obduracy, the Sikhs withdrew from the Senate and staged a walk out.

By now under pressure from Giani Kartar Singh, Bhim Sen Sachar was hammering the language formulae for East Punjab. This led to prolonged correspondence between Sachar, Nehru and Patel.[79] This yields some interesting facts.

Firstly, the Sikhs were insistent that the whole of Jalandhar Division including Kangra District and two districts of Ambala Division, viz Simla and Ambala, were Punjabi speaking areas. They wanted Ghaggar as the boundary between Punjabi and Hindi zones of East Punjab with parts of Ambala district south of Ghaggar in Punjabi zone. The Punjabi-renegade Hindus wanted exclusion of Kangra and Simla districts and three tehsils of Ambala district namely, Ambala,

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Naraingarh and Jagadhari because of Hindu majority there from the Punjabi zone.[80] So the Sikhs were in for a broader area purely on the basis of language, wherein they would not necessarily be in a majority. The Hindu narrow interests stood in the way.

Secondly, though Nehru talked of some "basic principles' like students being taught through the medium of their mother tongue being made applicable all over India, he wanted in East Punjab the option to be given to parents to choose the medium of instruction. This, in practical parlance, put premium on Hindu chauvinism. Nehru and Patel excelled each other in doubting the capacity of Punjabi as a medium at secondary and higher stages.[81] They were moved by partisan and sectarian considerations.

These con tabulations resulted in the announcement of the language formulae, known as 'Sachar Formulae' on October 1, 1949. It was in the nature of a pact between two Arya Samajist Hindu Ministers, Bhim Sen Sachar and Gopi Chand Bhargava, and two Sikh Ministers, Ujjal Singh and Giani Kartar Singh, all member of the Congress.

It demarcated East Punjab into two linguistic zones. Punjabi speaking zone consisted of Jalanduar division minus Kangra District plus Ropar and Kharar Tehsils of Ambala district, and all portions of Hissar district lying to the east of Ferozepur and Patiala side of Ghaggar river. The Hindi speaking zone consisted of Rohtak, Gurgaon, Karnal and Kangra districts plus Jagadhari and Naraingarh tehsils of Ambala district, and all portions of Hissar district lying to the south of Ghaggar river. Simla district and Ambala Tehsil of Ambala district were declared bilingual areas.

Punjabi in Gurmukhi script was the main language or the mother tongue in the Punjabi zone and Hindi in Dev Nagri script in the Hindi zone.

Punjabi was to be the medium of instruction in Punjabi speaking area in all schools upto the matriculation stage, and Hindi was to be taught as compulsory subject from the last class of primary upto matriculation (for girls it was upto middle level). In Hindi speaking area, it was to be vice versa. However, parents or guardians were given the option to choose the medium of instruction in the two zones; and it was not applicable to unaided recognised schools which were required to provide for the teaching of Punjabi and Hindi as a second language.

The Formulae was widely acclaimed by Punjabis including the Sikhs, though they were critical of the right of the parents to choose the medium of instruction for education of their children. It, however, met with severe criticism at the hands of Hindu-fundamentalist Arya Samajists who controlled the Hindu denominational educational institutions in urban areas and had control over the vernacular press. All of them owed fealty to the Congress. The PEPSU formulae similarly divided the state into two zones, but gave no option to the parents.

The Arya educational institutions asked Hindus to oppose the introduction of Punjabi; the fundamentalist vernacular press controlled by Congressite-Arya Samajists started an open campaign asking the Hindus to disown their mother tongue and instead return Hindi as their mother tongue in the next census. The Hindu national leaders, Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Patel made no effort to put the errant communal Congressite Hindus on the right path. Rather their sympathies lay with them. The conflict between the protagonists of Punjabi language and Punjabi renegades in Punjabi speaking area of East Punjab now took a sharper turn.

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Meanwhile, the attitude of Central Congress leadership had hardened towards the Akali Dal over the issue of Akali support to Capt. Gurbux Singh Dhillon of I.N.A. vis a vis Congress candidate in the by-election to the labour seat in East Punjab Assembly held in third week of September. Patel emphatically wrote to Baldev Singh on August 25, that "Akalis would suffer" in case they don't extend "straightforward support" to the Congress candidate and that "we shall then have to alter our course accordingly."[82] In another couple of days, Patel was ranting against Tara Singh's still holding his own after being six months in jail, and passionately clinging to his faith "in the invincibility and integrity of the Panth and other similar ideas." In sharp contrast was Golwalkar of RSS who "has come round to our view in several particulars" and accepted "certain limitation, within which he and the Sangh will work."[83] Since he could not bend Tara Singh, Patel had by now turned into a rabid Sikh baiter.

It was the impending visit of Jawaharlal Nehru to the United States in the first week of October 1949, that made Pate to relent and release Tara Singh after seven and a half months of incarceration. Only a fortnight earlier, he had turned down a plea by Nehru to release him for, "There is no change whatsoever in his attitude." Earlier, on July 3, Governor General, C. Rajagopalachari had opined to Patel, "I feel we have delayed releasing Tara Singh for few days unnecessarily. I would like you to ask him to go home before newspapers and others shout." CR was influenced by a write-up in the Sunday *Statesman* of the same day eulogising both Tara Singh's importance to the Sikhs, and the Sikhs "great sufferings as a people in the calamities of 1947 justifying specially sympathetic consideration for their sentiments by Authority." The paper had laid emphasis on the Sikh "capacity for discipline" and "their inherent loyalty to the new India."[84] Patel sought to encash Tara Singh's release by having Giani Kartar Singh to shift his support from Sachar, who otherwise was fast loosing ground, to Bhargava who second time took over as Premier in November, 1949.

Patel was in this frame of mind when the penultimate session of the CA was held in October 1949 to give final touches to the constitution. He was only reflecting the general sense of Hindu members who were in a hilarious or revivalist mood. For instance, the protagonists of Hindi won an upsetting victory over Congress's decades old commitment to Hindustani - an admixture of Punjabi, Urdu and Hindi - as the national language of India.

The decisions taken in May last on recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Minorities and incorporated in Articles 296 and 299 were reopened on October 14, 1949, amidst points of orders raised by Bhopinder Singh Man and Naziruddin Ahmad. These related to reservations for minorities in the services. These were done away with except for Scheduled Castes and Tribes. A new Article was inserted which provided for the President issuing a proclamation on the recommendation of governors of different states notifying the particular castes to whom the concession would be extended.

Hukam Singh made a vain bid to have the original proposal restored. He emphasised that "The Sikhs for the present cannot persuade themselves to have implicit faith in the party in power." He traced the history of malignant attitude of the Advisory Committee on Minorities towards the Sikhs in offering them only pious platitudes and of the communal majority, reopening of various decisions and progressively taking away what had been agreed to earlier. He also refuted the alleged undertaking given by the Sikh representatives on the Minorities Committee to forego all concession for having four of their scheduled castes being recognised as such. Even if so, he asked, "Is then their anxiety for that to be exploited and the opportunity utilised to get them to give up all

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safeguards? I do not believe it. . . Would this be secularism?" He accused the Congress of going back on past pledges offered to the Sikhs in 1929, 1946 and again in 1947 on the specious plea "that the circumstances have changed." The only change was that Muslims had got Pakistan. But Sikhs had not ceased to be a minority. He averred, "Pakistan resorted to crude and positive violence to eliminate their minorities. We are using a subtle, indirect and peaceful way of resolving the same question. True to our traditions, we are of course non-violent." He appealed to the majority "to win the confidence of minorities by positive action and not by mere slogans."[85]

This brought Patel on his feet. He was in a nasty mood, lost his senses, and spoke through his hat, rather Gandhian cap, at that.

To begin with he denied the very existence of promises made by the Congress in 1929, 1946 and 1947. To camouflage his own and his mentor Gandhi's sins in preferring partition rather than a composite nation, he perverted facts when he said "that there was not a single Sikh voice against the Partition." He ranted against Sikh over-representation in the army. He then bullied the Sikh representatives to give up the concession of treating four of their castes as scheduled castes, and then face the consequences. Hukaffi Singh said, "I do not find anywhere in the Constitution anything that we have secured at so high a price."

Patel referred to the quarrel between the two communities in East Punjab and said, "If there had been no Partition, perhaps we would have been able to settle our differences."[86] He was conscious that the Sikhs had come under the stranglehold of Brahminical Hindus. In this context, he referred to the "Organisation known as U.N.O., who day and night watch the situation all the world over and try to see how peace could be maintained."[87]

What really Patel meant by United Nations Organisations in the context of minorities, Sikhs in this case? He, admitted, "I know nothing about it." It seems he had an inkling that the question of injustice done to the minorities, Sikhs in this context, could come up before the Organisation at some stage, for what was involved was framing of the Constitution completely in violation of the political accord under which the Sikhs had agreed to throw in their lot with India! He, of course, meant that the Sikhs could seek redressal from United Nations Organisation.

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar while introducing the Draft Constitution in the Constituent Assembly had significantly observed, "The minorities have loyally accepted the rule of the majority *which is basically a communal majority*. It is for the majority to realise its duties not to discriminate against minorities. Jawaharlal Nehru, in the same vein observed on May 26, 1949, "We call ourselves nationalists, but perhaps in the mind of each the colour, the texture of nationalism that is present, is somewhat different from what is in the mind of the others. We call ourselves nationalist - and rightly so, and yet few of us are free from these separatist tendencies— whether they are communal, whether they are provincial or other. . ." Brave words, but meaningless.

The well meaning Englishman, Arthur Moore, who had gone on fast unto death with Gandhi in November 1947 when the fatten protested against withholding of certain payments to Pakistan, if the weekly *Thought* of October 29, 1949, significantly observed, "We must learn by our mistakes. It is bad enough that we have today two nations in the Indian sub-continent. Let us not do anything that might tend to the creation of third. Let it be said in fairness to the war-like Master Tara Singh that he is not demanding an independent Sikh National State. . . His greater concern is much the same as that of those who are clamouring for linguistic provinces, namely, a redistribution

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of boundaries as to provide the Sikhs with a viable province in which there should be Punjabi. . . . *It is distressing to find that responsible Hindu-owned papers appear to have forgotten everything and learnt nothing.* The Birla press urges the Government to repeat with the Sikhs the mistakes made with Muslims at a time, when the Muslims too had not thought of demanding an independent State and had not formulated the disastrous two nation theory. . . .

"Hindus are nourishing a most dangerous delusion if they persuade themselves that Hinduism is on the eve of a new period of reabsorption of Protestant Hindu elements. . . Also it is idle to deny that Sikhs have distinctive physical characteristics and aptitudes. . . That is an argument for a separate province of a federal state and not for an independent country. Therefore, while Master Tara Singh is in the mood to demand no more, India do well to agree with him. . ." He concluded by saying, "It should be obvious that harmonious India will not be possible unless we have a contented and loyal Sikh community."[88]

Moore's opinion was not expected to have any impact on the power drunk Congress leadership which went ahead with the formal adoption of the Constitution and signing of the historic document in November 1949.

It also led to the proliferation of vicious writing from the Arya Samajist and Birla press to the general Hindu press. For instance, the daily *Tribune* of November 12, 1949, wrote, "Why the Sikhs should show such a dread of the so-called Hindu majority in the Punjab, when they are ready to accept the Hindu majority in the Centre?. . . . Why should Hindu minority in a proposed Sikh province remain under a permanent Sikh majority?. . . The logic of the communalist leads straight to the exchange of population, and to the establishment of an independent State."[89] The exchange of population which was not enforced on Muslims getting Pakistan, was threatened in case Sikhs ask for reorganisation of the province on accepted linguistic principles, within the framework of the Indian Union. The Sikhs by the time were also agitated over disclosure of October 10, 1947, circular of Punjab Governor branding them criminals, etc.

Speaking on the third reading of the Constitution on November 21, 1949, Bhopinder Singh Man referred "to the over-centralisation of power at the centre" reducing "the States and the different constituents into mere glorified corporations." He hoped that the present temporary phase would be over soon, and the constitution amended to give "more power to the constituent units." He referred to the contrast in the attitude of the House towards the minorities between the start and end of its proceedings, and how "the minority question which was such a sacred trust with the majority, was brushed side, and lightly brushed aside, and that without the consent and wishes of the representatives of the minority communities." He pointed to the resentment among the Sikhs and questioned the wisdom "of not allowing Sikh backward classes in East Punjab and U.P. and other parts, the same benefits extended to their Hindu brethren."[90]

Hukam Singh, the same day, dealt in detail with the various parts of the Constitution. To begin with, the structure was built on the wrong foundations. All rights in article 19 were hedged with restrictive laws. The emergency provisions took away all civil liberties and an ambitious politician could emerge as a dictator. The centralisation of powers "saps local autonomy and makes the provinces irresponsible."

Thereafter, Hukam Singh recounted the Sikh contribution in the freedom struggle, and the promises made by the Congress leaders in 1929, on August 10, 1946, January 6, 1947, and March 8,

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1947, that the rights of Sikhs would not be jeopardised and for safeguarding their interests. Now, the Sikhs had been told that honouring those commitments would disfigure the constitution; according similar concessions to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Anglo-Indians who are a religious and racial minority does not impair its beauty.

Summing up the Sikh feelings, Hukam Singh concluded, "Naturally under these circumstances, as I have stated, the Sikhs feel utterly disappointed and frustrated. They feel that they have been discriminated against. Let it not be misunderstood that the Sikh community has agreed to this Constitution. I wish to record an emphatic protest here. My community cannot subscribe its assent to this historic document."[91]

After the third reading followed the roll call for individual members to sign the constitution. When Bhopinder Singh Man and Hukam Singh were called upon to do so, they refused to append their signatures to the historic document saying, "The Sikhs don't accept this Constitution", and "The Sikhs reject this Constitution", respectively. Both of them strongly felt that the Constitution, as framed, was designed to ensure the supremacy of Brahminism over other sections of society especially minorities and *Dalits* –backward sections of society.

The trainers deliberately did not put the word *secular* in the preamble or anywhere else, as they were fully seized of spirit of Hindu renaissance. It was reprehensible that the Sikhs who constituted the third party at the time of the transfer of power were isolated and deliberately thrown out of the national mainstream by pushing its contours towards Hindu revivalism.

The Sikh position about the constitution was a straightforward and an honest one. But that was not so about that of Jawaharlal Nehru. He manoeuvred to be the first to sign the Constitution, but in a few years virtually subverted it by beating it out of shape. That, he did so by due processes of law, provides no excuse, especially because he was the Prime Minister when it was being framed.

There were still two months between the formal adoption of the Constitution on November 26, 1949, and its coming into force on January 26, 1950. The efforts of Tara Singh vide his article in the daily, *Ajit* of November 27, 1949, and Press Conference of Hukam Singh at Bombay on January 1, 1950, emphasising the purely linguistic basis of the demand for reconstruction of the Punjab only got strident responses.

Precisely, Hukam Singh said, "The stand of the Akali Dal is purely national. The demand for a Punjabi speaking province is entirely democratic. It has nothing of separatism or disruptionism about it. We do not want a separate state, much less an independent one. We only ask for readjustment of boundaries on a purely linguistic and cultural basis. Even then we are decried and dubbed as communal. It is cruelty on the part of some sections to misunderstand us, and sheer dishonesty on the part of those who misrepresent us."[92] How was the demand for Punjabi speaking state a Sikh demand and that it visualised Sikh majority, was beyond the comprehension of an ordinary Sikh. But Congress had decided to close its mind and overruled a rational approach.

The Working Committee of Shiromani Akali Dal at Amritsar on January 8, 1950, in a historic resolution refused to accept the Constitution on the grounds, that "It monopolises most powers for the Centre to the prejudice of the states; reserves-enormous authority for the executive and the legislature to the prejudice of the judiciary; makes personal freedom illusory by hedging too many restrictions and limitations; and gives dictatorial powers to the President in times of

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emergency and does not guarantee anything for the poor and neglected."[93] Prophetic words. And, it called upon the Sikhs to boycott the Republic Day celebrations.

The new constitution was inaugurated amidst chanting of Hindu *mantras* on January 26, 1950, when Dr. Rajendra Prasad took over as head of a so called secular state! How could the state be secular when the leadership was deeply imbued with the spirit of religious revivalism? Under Nehru and Patel, the main architects of the Constitution, Hindu chauvinism and secularism became identical and coterminous. It was another matter that Nehru, propped by Maulana Azad, started fulminating against Hindu communalism, when in another few months the Congress organisation was captured by Purushottam Das Tandon and people of his ilk aligned to Patel. For once, Tara Singh and Nehru were on the same wave length in calling the Congress communal! Tara Singh wanted to put an end to that communalism. Nehru wanted to bend it to suit his convenience.

Whatever the contours of the Indian brand of secularism, from its very inception it was inimical to Sikhism and maintenance of the Sikh identity. As inalienable rights proclaimed by the American Declaration of Independence 1776 did not impinge on Negro slavery for a hundred years, the Sikhs are yet to find an acceptable equation within the framework of Indian secularism.

In another few months, notification regarding members of Scheduled Castes was being prepared. Giani Kartar Singh who had been inducted as minister in the Punjab on May 5, 1950, to the chagrin of Sardar Patel, told Chief Minister Gopi Chand Bhargava and the Chief Secretary that there had been no decision in the Minorities Committee of the CA for adding the note confining the concession to the four Sikh Scheduled Castes only, and that it was to be extended to all Sikh Scheduled Castes. Bhargava felt the justness of the case for inclusion of the Sikhs from all Scheduled Castes for being given the concessions. He felt that, firstly, the number was small, around 30 to 40 thousands in all, and, secondly, it would prevent a propaganda about the discriminatory attitude towards some sections of the Sikh Scheduled Castes.[94] Patel, however, conveyed him his displeasure in taking that much interest in the matter and wrote, "You do not seem to understand the full implication of this demand, nor, it seems the political and religious game behind it". He had earlier unsuccessfully been approached by PEPSU Chief Minister, Gian Singh Rarewala, in the matter. Patel warned Bhargava against falling "in the same error again."[95]

The net result of the "religious game" played by Patel was that the Sikh Scheduled Castes not given the benefits in Punjab and PEPSU in several thousands and almost all Sikhs Scheduled Castes in U.P., about 2,00,000, reverted back to the Hindu fold. Not only that. Giani Kartar Singh's efforts in mid-1950 to persuade Scheduled Castes particularly Ad Dharmis to remain within the Sikh fold and go in for baptism ceremony of the Khalsa, caused friction between him and Prithvi Singh Azad, Hindu Scheduled Caste Minister. Patel frowned upon Giani and wanted him to "make a choice between conversion of Scheduled Castes and ministership."[96] The 1951 census figures for U.P., for instance, showed a decline in Sikh population despite incoming of Sikh displaced persons following the partition. Hinduism came out to be the net gainer at the cost of Sikhism, thanks to the implementation of the provisions of the 'secular' constitution, immediately after its coming into force. It set into motion the process of assimilation of the Sikhs within the Hindu fold.

The tension between Giani Kartar Singh and Prithvi Singh Azad had its reverberations in the press and was contributing to the polarisation on communal lines.

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The Akali Dal early in July 1950 issued show cause notices to former Akali Member of Parliament and state legislature who had joined the Congress following March 1948 resolution, why they should not be asked to come out of the Congress?

Jawaharlal Nehru by the time activated himself and wanted mobilisation of Punjab Government and prominent Sikhs to contain Master Tara Singh's call to "protect the Sikhs from the communalism of the majority."[97] Baldev Singh now came under counter pressures of Tara Singh and Nehru.[98] On July 14, he pointed out to Nehru that both the Punjab government and Punjab Congress, because of their clumsiness, "had given a handle to communalists on both sides to go on with their propaganda."[99] But Nehru was worried only about Tara Singh's activity and not at all about the doings of Congressite Hindus. Baldev Singh reiterated his complete dissociation from Tara Singh and sought Nehru's advice for the meeting of ex-Panthic representatives fixed for July 23, 1950, at Ambala.

Meanwhile, on July 20, the Shiromani Akali Dal adopted a resolution, a significant document, directing its former members to come out of the Congress and return to the parent body in view of the changed circumstances. It charged the Congress of failure to "appreciate the sentiments and ambitions of the Sikh community, especially when they are in consonance with nationalistic and secular principles," and accused the Congress of "continuous oppression and suppression of the Sikhs in all walks of life."[100]

The government, because of its partisan approach, could mount only a feeble response to the Akali offensive. Nehru like a desperate man leapt at the so-called nationalist Sikhs led by Baba Kharak Singh, a phantom of his earlier self of 1920s to bail him out. Santokh Singh Vidyarthi, Private Secretary to Kharak Singh, on July 30, offered Nationalist Sikh's services to Nehru to oppose the policies of Tara Singh. He, however, also highlighted "the communal minded policy of some of the Government officials," and "discriminatory treatment meted out to some of the Sikhs in the services and the army." He inadvertently gave support to Tara Singh when he vouchsafed that many Sikhs in services had gone to Kharak Singh to relate "their tales of misery and grievances."[101] Patel was not taken in. He, firstly, told Nehru that nationalist Sikhs, however well intentioned, had no following and could not deliver the goods. Opposition to Akalis "must come from those who are better organised and more active and can command better following."[102] It was this advice that later led Nehru to fall back on schismatic Sikh set ups like pseudo-Sant Nirankaris of Delhi and others to counter the Sikh aspirations.

Tara Singh from now onwards was emerging as the supreme leader of the Sikhs, a status any Sikh leader lacked since Kharak Singh's going into oblivion in 1930.

With a view to thwart the polarisation of forces, and prevent ex-Akali members to respond to the call of the Akali Dal, the government started an intimidatory and repressive policy against the Akalis and banned public meetings. Only Jaswant Singh Duggal from Rawalpindi came out of the Congress.

Master Tara Singh was arrested, second time in independent India, on September 7 on charges of delivering objectionable speeches two months earlier. N.C. Chatterjee, a former High Court Judge and prominent Hindu Mahasabha leader, en gratis, argued Master Tara Singh's case before the Punjab High Court. It was exhilarating for the Sikhs to appreciate that not all classes of

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Hindus were opposed to them and their aspirations, but that the opposition was confined only to the followers of Gandhi, the doyen of Sikh-baiters.

The High Court held that section 124A Criminal Procedure Code was violative of the Indian Constitution and restrictions imposed on Master Tara Singh's speeches were ultra vires. He was released on November 20.[103]

Nehru was by now rattled by judgments of Bombay, Patna and Punjab High Courts on freedom of speech and press, and detention of people without trial. Being basically an autocrat, wearing a democratic mask, he now (when the Constitution had run its course hardly for one year) wanted to subvert the wishes of the framers of the Constitution by taking recourse to amendments. Some of the Congress members like N.V. Gadgil, taking shelter behind parliamentary privileges, started attacking judges in Parliament.[104]

Speaking at Amritsar on December 3, 1950, shortly after his release, Tara Singh accused the Congress of creating a rift between the Hindus and the Sikhs for political reasons. Later, speaking at, Delhi on December 13, 1950, he stated that the "Sikh religion today is in great danger and in order to protect it, great sacrifices are needed." He invited the Communists and others to join in formation of an anti-Congress front.

In another few days, Amritsar was scene of two opposite conventions. The first convention, All Indian Congress Sikhs Convention, convened for December 15, by Partap Singh Kairon, President, Punjab Congress, consisted of Congressite and Nationalist Sikhs, who for the first time met on one platform. They constituted an essential but subsidiary part of Gandhiite fundamentalist opposition to legitimate Sikh-cum-Punjabi aspirations. The main plank, however, then was represented by Congressite-Arya Samajists like Virendra of daily *Milap*, Jagat Narain of daily *Hind Samachar* and others who only last month, November 1950, had held an All Hindu Parties Convention at Amritsar, with Rai Bahadur Badri Das in the chair. They even objected to the Sachar formulae, made no pretense to secularism or principles, and *a la* Gandhi wanted total absorption of the Sikhs within the Hindu society.[105]

The All India Congress Sikh Convention was presided over by Sardul Singh Caveeshar and attended, inter alia, by Surjit Singh Majithia, Giani Zail Singh, Gurdial Singh Dhillon, Jathedar Udham Singh Nagoke, Jathedar Sohan Singh Jallalusman. Caveeshar in his presidential address on the one hand equated the demand for Punjabi speaking state within the Indian Union to Jinnah's demand for sovereign Pakistan, and, on the other hand, conceded that Congress was committed to creation of states on linguistic principles. That "is an Ail India question. The final settlement can certainly wait for a few years more. Our immediate need is to end the misery, of the people who sleep in the open without any covering or shelter, who do not get enough food to keep them alive, and who have no means of livelihood even if they are prepared to put in honest labour to earn their living."

He did not elaborate how the creation of linguistic states now would retard the removal of misery or poverty on which he laid emphasis and above all how the Punjabi-renegade Hindus, who were bent on misrepresenting Punjabi speaking state, as a Sikh state, would own up Punjabi language after a few years. Anyhow, Partap Singh Kairon, who was aligned in Punjab Congress with the most reactionary group led by Jagat Narain created niche for himself among the Hindu bosses by

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advocating a greater Punjab instead of Punjabi speaking state.[106] This was after the heart of most Congressite Hindu overlords.

At the Sikh convention held at Amritsar on December 16, 1950, Master Tara Singh spoke on wide range of subjects. These included the demand for Punjabi speaking state by redrawal of boundaries on linguistic and cultural basis to promote development of different parts. No mention was ever made of its being Sikh majority area, or for creation of Sikh homeland.[107] Hukam Singh clarifying the demand said:

> What the Sikhs desire today is only a respectable and dignified citizenship. They expect no favour and they ask for no concession. They want protection from the tyranny of the communal majority, to which they are entitled to as law abiding citizens of the country. The Sikhs believe that they can secure this protection, if a Punjabi-speaking province is conceded to them, where they will have a more effective voice. It must be clearly and definitely understood that the Sikhs do not desire a separate state, nor even necessarily a Sikh majority area.

He drew attention to Nehru's statement of April 5, 1946, and stated, "If Congress is really honest about its secular ideals, it should not only facilitate the creation of Punjabi speaking province, but make it an article of faith."[108] This was a big IF.

It was significant that the Congress Sikhs Convention was held after the death of Sardar Patel on December 15 morning and in a way chalked out the policy to be pursued by the new dispensation. The Panthic Convention on the other hand posed a challenge to the new administration to pursue a principled policy.

The death of Sardar Patel on December 15, 1950, brought to an end an era. It came as a great relief to Jawaharlal Nehru who was feeling ill at ease since Purushottam Das Tandon defeated Acharya J.B. Kripalani in the Congress Presidential elections. The last exchanges between Nehru and Patel were marked by "extreme irritation on trivial matters of administration."[109] Nehruites were on the run and Nehru himself remained uneasily perched as Prime Minister with the full knowledge that Patel was a dying man.

Nehru, 14 years younger to Patel, got a lease of as much period to shape India's destiny in his own exclusive, Brahminical, racialist style Nehru so far had been in office, but not really in power, which both within the party and the government lay with Patel. The duumvirate was now at an end. And, Nehru era, in the real sense of the term, began.

During the last couple of years, "Nehru had been a success in bringing about a cataclysmic change in the attitude of Patel from favouring a 'Sikh Homeland' to a volatile suppression of the Sikh identity. This had led to a clash of wills between Patel and Master Tara Singh to the detriment of the Sikhs in reopening and recasting various provisions of the Constitution agreed to earlier. It had sufficiently vitiated the atmosphere for the Sikh community from being accepted as an equal partner in Indian polity. Nehru now in his inimitable style had to proceed from this premise in pursuing his policy of negativism towards the Sikhs to which we now turn.

Footnotes:

1. For instance, Maharaja Yadayendra Singh of Patiala wrote to Sardar Vallabhbhai J. Patel on September 5, 1948, that, "It is very widely felt among the Sikhs that the very basis on which the national life of India was built... has been ignored so far as the Sikh are concerned. The Muslims demanded a separate sovereign State and they got it. The Hindus, who composed by far the largest portion of the second element described as general, have to all intents and purposes got another sovereign State where they predominate. It is only the third element, i.e. the Sikhs, who have not only, not benefitted from the new arrangement at all, but who, although due to reasons not inherent in it, have lost a good deal of what they possesed even before." Durga Das (Ed), *Sardar Patel's Correspondence*, 1945-50, (Ahmedabad, 1971-74), (hereinafter referred to as *SPC*), Vol. IV, p. 326.
2. Set up on January 24, 1947, it was divided into two cub-committees - Minorities Sub-Committee and Fundamental Rights Sub-Committee.
3. *SPC*, Vol. IV, p. 327.
4. Sardar Vallabhbhai J. Patel, it may be recalled, had been deeply involved in the Punjab politics and various Sikh moves like Azad Punjab and the demand for Sikh State as counter moves to the demand for Pakistan.
5. Harbans Singh, *The Heritage of the Sikhs*, (Delhi, 1983), p. 328.
6. Ibid, p. 329.
7. Certain observers regarded this as his finest hour. In retrospect, continuous migration of Hindus, as also of other minorities - Christians and tribals -and lately infiltration of Muslims too, from East Bengal to neighbouring parts of India - Bengal, Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, etc - on continuous basis, sometimes as a torrent as in 1950 (which brought the two countries on the verge of war) and again in early 1960s, but always there, reflected sadly on the wisdom of Gandhi's achievement.
8. Pyarelal, *Mahatma Gandhi*, *The Last Phase*, (Ahmedabad, 1956), Vol. II, pp. 385-86.
9. G.D. Tendulkar, *MAHATMA*, *Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi*, (Ahmedabad, 1969 reprint). Vol. 8, p. 139.
10. Pyarelal, n. 8, Vol II, p. 478.
11. Durgadas, *From Curzon to Nehru and After*, (Delhi, 1969), p. 268.
12. Ajit Singh Sarhadi, *Punjabi Suba: the story of struggles* (Delhi, 1970) p. 156.
13. The *Spokesman* Weekly, (Delhi), Anniversary Mumber, Vol. 23 No. 1, p. 19.
14. Pyarelal, n. 8, Vol. II, p. 481.
15. *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, (hereinafter referred to as *CIV*) (Delhi, Publications Division. Government of India, various years.) Vol. 89, p. 274.
16. Kapur Singh, *Saachi Sakhi*, (Jalandhar, 1972), p. 107.
17. Pyarelal, n. 8, Vol. II, p. 481
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid, p. 482.
20. *CW* Vol. 90, pp. 72-73 & 96.
21. The *Harijan*, July 6, 1940, in *CW* Vol. 72, pp. 229-31.
22. The *Harijan*, June 22, 1940, in Ibid., pp. 187-89.
23. H. M. Seervai, *Partition of India*, *Legend and Reality* (Bombay 1989), p. 172-73.
24. *CW*, Vol. 90, p. 96.
25. Tendulkar, n. 9, Vol. 8, p. 258.
26. Emphasis added. *CW* Vol. 90, p. 177.
27. Hukam Singh in the *Spokesman* Weekly, December 11, 1972. He wrote his Memoirs which were published as a series of articles in *Spokesman* Weekly in years 1972-74.

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28. The *Statesman*, December 2, 1947, quoted in Satya Mehta Rai, *Punjab Since Partition* (Delhi, 1986, edn.), p. 273.
29. Tendulkar, n. 9, Vol. 8, p. 268.
30. emphasis added. Ibid.
31. Minutes dated January 21, 1948, of Dr. Rajendra Prasad. Text in *SPC*, Vol. VI, pp. 307-10.
32. Patel was quite upset at Gandhi's resolve and on January 12, 1948, before the fast started "got up without a word", writes Maulana Azad. "I stopped him. He shouted back, "What is the use of my staying? Gandhiji is not prepared to listen to me. He seems determined to blacken the name of Hindus before the whole world. If this is the attitude, I have no use for him." "But", adds Dr. Gopal Singh, "he had created against the Sikhs a kind of public opinion throughout the world what they have still to live down." Gopal Singh also talks about Gandhi's double standards. See, Gopal Singh, *A History of the Sikh People*, 1969-1988, (Delhi, 1988), p. 718.
33. *CW* Vol. 90, p. 470. Sahib Rai of Patti around 1726 had spoken the same language.
34. Hukam Singh in the *Spokesman* Weekly, March 5, 1973.
35. Nirad C. Chaudhuri, *Thy Hand*, *Great Anarch! India 1921-52*, (London, 1987), p. 792.
36. *CW*, Vol. 89, p. 380; and Vol. 90, p. 80.
37. Gopal Singh, n. 32, p. 706.
38. Emphasis added. Ajit Singh Sarhadi, n. 12, pp. 146-47.
39. Hukam Singh in the *Spokesman* Weekly, August 6, 1973.
40. Ibid.
41. That explains the denial of chance *inter alia* to Lt. Gen. Kulwant Singh and later Lt. Gen. Harbakhsh Singh and Lt. Gen. P.S. Bhagat, despite his seniority.
42. Cf. p 206, ante.
43. 1931 census had no language column. Cf. Hukam Singh in *the Spokesman* weekly September 11, 1972.
44. This was in sharp contrast to the advice tendered to Punjabi Hindus by leaders of Rashtrya Swym Sewak Sangh in 1957 and again in 1967 i.e. before and after the formation of Punjabi-speaking state, to own up the Punjabi language with all its consequences. Who were communal and who pseudo secularists?
45. Sarhadi, n. 12, p. 135.
46. I am using the word race here in Gandhian sense.
47. Sarhadi, n. 12, p. 157-58.
48. *Tribune*, February 26, 1948; also Rai, n. 28, pp. 273-74.
49. Master Tara Singh was not in favour of the move but did not oppose it. Hence, it was carried unanimously.
50. Gopal Singh, n. 32, p. 720; *Tribune*, March 17, 1948.
51. Partap Singh, *Biography: S. Hukam Singh*, (Delhi, 1989), pp. 44-45.
52. Sarhadi, n. 12, p. 162.
53. Ibid, pp. 163-64.
54. Hukam Singh in the *Spokesman* Weekly; October 9, 1972.
55. Sarhadi, n. 12, pp. 163-64.
56. Ibid, p. 165.
57. Rai, n. 28, p. 294.
58. In early November, East Punjab Assembly set up a Minority Committee to make recommendations to Constituent Assembly. This made the Sikh members to put their heads together to formulate their viewpoint.
59. The *Sunday Standard*, November 15, 1948, quoted in Rai, n. 28, pp. 274-75; Sarhadi, n. 12, pp. 166-67.

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60. Emphasis added. *Tribune* November 15, 1948 quoted in Sarhadi, p. 171.
61. Letter dated December 29, 1948 to Patel, *SPC*, Vol. 6, p. 352.
62. Patel to Baldev Singh, December 30, 1948, Ibid, pp. 353-54.
63. Hukam Singh in the *Spokesman* Weekly, October 23, 1972.
64. Emphasis added. Patel to Nehru, February 9, 1949, Ibid, p. 122.
65. Ibid, p. 120.
66. Nehru to Patel February 11, 1949, Ibid, p. 122.
67. Sarhadi. n. 12, p. 173.
68. Caveeshar to Patel. April 4, 1949, *SPC* Vol. 9, pp. 127-30.
69. Ibid.
70. Krishan Gopal Dull to Patel June 13, 1949, Ibid pp. 167-68.
71. Patel to Sachar, April 11, 1949. Ibid, pp. 167-68.
72. Sarhadi, n. 12, p. 179.
73. Emphasis added. Hukam Singh in the *Spokesman* Weekly, October 23, 1972.
74. Emphasis added. Text in Hukam Singh. *Spokesman* Weekly, March 19, 1973.
75. Patel to Nehru, May 10, 1949, *SPC* Vol. 9, p. 136.
76. Greatly disappointed, Giani Kartar Singh called on Maulana Abul Kalam Azad who told him that in his reading the fountainhead of Hindu fundamentalism, *katarwad*, was none other than Jawaharlal Nehru. When asked, how he was continuing in the government and supporting Nehru vis a vis Patel, Azad reviewed the pitiable state to which the Muslims in India had been reduced and said that his only hope lay in Nehru's being megalomaniac. It was his constant endeavour to pump that megalomania to ward off, as long as possible, the onrush of the Hindu fundamentalism to which the Hindu Congressites alter partition were rushing headlong. - Master Tara Singh's talks with Dr. Kuldip Singh, FRCS, Prof and Head, Surgery Department, Post Graduate Institute of Medical Sciences, Chandigarh. Dr Kuldip Singh, first cousin of Tara Singh's daughter-in-law operated upon Master Tara Singh a few weeks before his death, and held talks with him for about 20 hours, reviewing the course of Sikh politics in post-independent India.
77. Emphasis added. Constituent Assembly. Debates. Vol. VIII, pp. 353-54.
77a. Ibid.
78. Sarhadi. n. 12. p. 479.
79. *SPC* Vol. 9. pp. 142-55.
80. Sachar to Nehru, July 9, and Nehru to Patel, July 22, 1949, Ibid, pp. 143-53.
81. Ibid.
82. Patel to Baldev Singh, August 25, 1949, Ibid, p. 162.
83. Patel to Nehru, August 28, 1949. Ibid. Vol. 8, pp. 334-38.
84. Ibid, vol. 9, pp. 141-42 & 185-87.
85. Constituent Assembly, Debates, vol. X, pp. 232-36.
86. Ibid, pp. 246-50.
87. Ibid.
88. Reproduced in Sarhadi, n. 12, p. 200-01.
89. Ibid, p. 199.
90. Constituent Assembly, Debates, Vol. XI. pp. 721-23.
91. Ibid, pp. 749-53.
92. Sarhadi. n. 12, p. 204.
93. Jawaharlal Nehru, *Letters to Chief Ministers*. (G. Parthasarthy, Ed.) Vol. 2, p. 9.
94. Bhargava to Patel, June 6, 1950, *SPC* Vol 9 p. 357.
95. Patel to Bhargava, June 8, 1950. Ibid, p. 358.

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96. Patel to Bhargava, July 8, 1950. Ibid, pp. 367-68.
97. Jawaharlal Nehru, n. 93, p. 149 (fn by Ed).
98. Nehru to Baldev Singh, July 11, 1950, *SPC* Vol X, p. 446.
99. Baldev Singh to Nehru, July 14, 1950, Ibid. p. 447.
100. For text, Sarhadi, n. 12, pp. 208-09.
101. Vidyarthi to Nehru, July 30, 1950, *SPC*, Vol. X, pp. 449-52.
102. Patel to Nehru, July 31, 1950, Ibid, p. 452.
103. Nehru, n. 93, Vol. 2, p. 290.
104. Ibid, pp. 291-92.
105. Sarhadi, n. 12, pp. 211-12.
106. Ibid, pp. 213-14.
107. Ibid, p. 215.
108. Ibid, pp. 215-16.
109. Sarvepalli Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru*, *A Biography*, (Delhi, 1986) Vol 2, p. 149.

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7
Nehru's Negativism
(1950 - 1964)

Mentioning of Jawaharlal Nehru as his successor, M.K. Gandhi had written that "When I am gone, he will speak my language". But that was not to be. To Jawaharlal, Gandhi was a big humbug. In candid moments, as in his talks with Canadian Prime Minister, Lester B. Pearson, in 1955, he dilated what an imposter Gandhi was: "You know, he real ly was an awful old hypocrite."[1] Not surprisingly, Nehru buried Gandhiism deep. He, however, carried on relentlessly Gandhi's policy of intolerance of Sikhism. For that, Nehru was not necessarily influenced by Gandhi. He had his own family, Gangu Brahmin, heritage to inspire him as well.

Nehru spent the better part of 1951 in containing the forces of Hindu revivalism that had overwhelmed the Congress party under the leadership of Patel. Nehru, now, was breathing a different air and began talking about secularism. In Nehruvian parlance, it meant showing some accommodation to the, inter alia, Muslims, but none to the Sikhs. He propounded the thesis that the association of his Cabinet Minister, K.M. Munshi, and of the President, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, with the inaugural celebrations of Som Nath Temple smacked of Hindu revivalism, and was against India's secularism. Both defied him and challenged him to do his worst.

Nehru, however, successfully fought Purushottam Das Tandon. He was a success in dislodging him from the office of Congress President in early September 1951. Nehru himself replaced Tandon in violation of his earlier explicit views of not combining the office of Prime Minister with that of Congress President.

In this war, Nehru defied all the democratic norms and values. His keeping of Rafi Ahmed Kidwai and Ajit Prasad Jain in the Cabinet, after they had resigned from the Congress party, was violative of all democratic canons.

Nehru used his indispensability for the Congress, in view of the forthcoming elections, to a devastating effect. As a correspondent of London *Times*, September 11, 1951, observed, "It has left mixed sensations, ranging from tempered approval to condemnation of tactics employed to achieve his objective, and bitter criticism of his supposed motive." Further that, "Some expressed misgivings about the precedent of one person holding the position of Prime Minister and Congress President simultaneously. The *Statesman* was the most perspicacious in noting the danger of excessive dependence on one man, a problem of increasing importance with the passage of time. Socialists decried the precedent of dual office as presaging a totalitarian drift in Congress politics, while Communists dismissed the change as of no real consequence."[2]

Nehru in 1951 aspired to attain the position he conceived for himself in 1937, of being an arch Machiavelli or Chanakya. A pen portrait, generally presented as self-evaluation is available in Nehru's write up, "The Rashtrapati" under the pen-name "Chanakya", which was published by the prestigious *Modern Review* of Calcutta.

> Jawaharlal Nehru is certainly not a fascist, not only by conviction but by temperament. He is far too much of an autocrat for the crudity and vulgarity of fascism. . . . Jawaharlal cannot become a fascist. And yet he has all the makings of a dictator in him, vast popularity, a

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strong will directed to a well-defined purpose, energy, pride, organisational capacity, ability, hardness, and, with all his love of the crowd, an intolerance of others and a certain contempt of the weak and the inefficient. His flashes of temper are well known and even when they are controlled, the curling of the lips betrays him.[3]

Nehru's victory came at the eleventh hour, hardly leaving much time before the January 1952 general elections. In Nehru's own words many a Congressmen functioned as worst communalists. The disease was widespread both in the party and the government, touching even the President. Nehru, of necessity, had to effect a compromise. He co-opted all those antiquated persons on showing their fealty to him. The politics became personalised. Those non-conforming all over the cow-belt were thrown out. Such came out to be the position also of Dr. Gopi Chand Bhargava, Chief Minister of Punjab, who was made to resign in July 1951 and forced out of the organisation by end of the year. Meanwhile, Punjab was placed under President's rule under the new Constitution, because the Nehruites could not muster sufficient support in the Punjab Assembly.

The Congress under Nehru continued as an over arching body, of people of diverse and mutually contradictory viewpoints, tied to the apron strings of Nehru. He established himself as a super-President and retained that status in the Congress. The Working Committee was selected with his approval dispensing the normal procedure. It was practically nominated for life. And, vacancies occurring because of death etc, both in the Working Committee or the government were filled by inducting descendents of the deceased including the widows. In the process, Nehru laid foundations of a feudal democracy hovering around personal loyalty to him. In the words of his official biographer, "from the end of 1950 the Government of India was basically one-man show".[4]

Nehru perfected the instruments of Brahmin-Bania raj, and also laid the foundations of institutionalised corruption. Firstly, he marshalled the support of the underprivileged, the backward classes, by projecting himself as a champion of their interests, though in the process he was careful in preventing the emergence of issue based politics.

Secondly, he underplayed communism and overplayed communalism as a threat to the Indian fabric, and in the process sought to marshall minority support for the Congress. He, at first, played up Hindu Mahasabha and later the 1951 established Jan Sangh, an illicit offspring of interaction of Congress and Rashtrya Swym Sewak Sangh (RSS), as a threat to the Muslim minority. He took advantage of continuous communal riots, which he made little efforts to contain much less stamp out, in orienting the Muslims towards the Congress which itself was a citadel of Hindu revivalist forces. In the Punjab, he took advantage of growing Hindu-Sikh communal schism to marshal Punjabi-renegade Hindus, a minority, behind him. He made no efforts to discipline errant Congressite-Arya Samajists propagating for disowning of their mother tongue, Punjabi, by their co-religionists in the 1951 census in Punjab and Pepsu.[5] His statement that such elements were resorting to untruth was too mild, and that the two sides were conducting row over Punjabi language through the medium of the Urdu press, the only dominant one in the province, mischievous and off the mark. Nehru's partisanship for Punjabi-renegades was explicit. He helped to intensify communal tension by inducting a Congress ministry led by Col. Raghbir Singh in May 1951 in PEPSU.[6] Nehru, all over, sought to marshal minorities as a vote bank by instilling in them fear of majority - the Hindus in case of the Muslims, and the Sikhs in case of the Punjabi-renegade Hindus with whom he otherwise felt an affinity. In the process, he sought to confuse the interplay of socio-political forces at work in India.

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Thirdly, through the Industries (Development and Regulation) Act of 1951, which made growth dependent upon seeking government permission through a licence, he, in the words of C. Rajagopalachari, introduced 'licence and permit Raj'[7] This widened its network in the years to come and institutionalised corruption. Haifa decade later, C.D. Deshmukh accused the Nehru administration of corruption at higher echelons and challenged him to set up a Commission to enable him to lead evidence. Nehru brushed that aside. Firstly, he said he was more interested in development, in the process conceding the nexus between development and corruption. Secondly, he said that the money had remained within India.[8] Verily, Nehru laid foundations of a modern but obsolescent and corrupt India.

Fourthly, Nehru started striking blows at the Constitution, to begin with by curtailing the fundamental rights.

Fifthly, Nehru's assumption of the absolute powers did not change his style of functioning. He continued to be vague and indefinite. The vocabulary 'ought', 'should', 'might be', he had picked up in the earlier phase, continued to haunt him, making him indecisive and uncertain in providing leadership at the crucial times. Especially so, as he was gradually surrounded by courtiers and psychophants. Also, Nehru was not inclined to listen to independent opinion. The cabinet meetings were increasingly bereft of free discussion. Nehru progressively lost verve, and, because of lack of interaction, became stale and stereotyped.

Lastly, so far as the Sikhs are concerned, Nehru's attitude towards them could be summed up in one word, malicious. His public meeting at Ramlila Grounds, Delhi, on June 20, 1951, to celebrate Baba Kharak Singh's birthday was reflective of his hovering for alternative centres of power within the Sikh community. It were these yearnings that later led him to promote schismatic Sant Nirankaris to weaken Sikhism.

Jan Sangh and the Socialist breakways from the Congress were new political elements that arose in the horizon of the Punjab in 1951. The Communists had their pockets of influence for the last two decades or so. However, the Congress and the Akalis were the main contenders for political power in the Punjab and Pepsu. The battle lines were drawn in the second half of 1951.

The Sikh aspirations were summed up in one sentence: "Save us from the communalism of the majority community."[9] Nehru for them personified that majority.

The Akali Dal manifesto published in the *Spokesman* Weekly of August 29, 1951, averred: "The true test of democracy, in the opinion of Shiromani Akali Dal, is that the minority should feel that they are really free and equal partners in the destiny of the country; (a) To bring home this sense of freedom to the Sikhs, it is vital that a Punjabi-speaking province should be carved out from the different States of the country on the basis of the Punjabi language and culture. This will not only be in fulfilment of the pre-partition Congress programme and pledges, but also be in entire conformity with the universally recognised principles governing the formation of provinces, (b) The Shiromani Akali Dal is in favour of the formation of provinces on a linguistic and cultural basis throughout India, but holds it as a question of life and death for the Sikhs that a new Punjab be created immediately, (c) The Shiromani Akali Dal has reason to believe that a Punjabi speaking province may give Sikhs the needful security. It believes in a Punjabi speaking province as an autonomous unit of India."

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The Sikh frustration was fully summed up by the Staff Correspondent of the *Time of India* (Independence Day issue-August 15, 1951), when he wrote, "Admittedly, most of the Sikhs are sore against the Congress. In the Punjab in particular, the so-called Congressmen have been hostile to the Sikhs and to all what the Sikhs stand for. . . No leading Congressman, no topmost national leader thought it worthwhile to understand the viewpoint of the Sikhs, or to hold aloft the olive branch of peace. The only thing they did was to denounce them with bell, book and candle". The correspondent went on to add that "The preservation of their distinctive culture, tradition and language" lay in Punjabi speaking province. "Therein lies the key to the future of the Sikhs. They cannot brook the idea of their culture, or themselves, being swallowed up."[10]

These were precisely the objectives that were driving the Gandhiites, especially Jawaharlal Nehru, in pursuing this course of action.

Nehru sought to outdo Jan Sangh and adopted a purely communal plank in marshalling Punjabi Hindus behind the Congress. Speaking on Gandhi *jayanti*, October 2, 1951, Nehru maliciously dubbed Punjabi speaking state as a "Sikh state". He adduced additional reason that conceding it would imperil the northern borders of India.[10] Verily, his words must have given solance to Gandhi's soul, that his successor was carrying on his work!

There were saner voices like those of Prof Om Prakash Kahol of Sanatan Dharam College, Ambala, who wrote in the *Spokesman* of October 17, 1951. "In my opinion, the most effective way to guard against the principles of the Sikh state - a conception which haunts the imagination of many - is, not to oppose Punjabi, but to induce more Hindus to own Punjabi, and to profess it as their mother tongue. The Punjabi province will then comprise the whole of Punjab, Pepsu and Himachal Pradesh areas. . . . If Hindus continue their anomalous antipathy against Punjabi, they will be paving the way for the creation of a Sikh state, which they can easily avert now." Such voices remained in the wilderness and went unheeded.

Nehru's outburst at the public meeting at Patiala on January 4, 1952, "I will not allow India to be divided again", was expressive of typical Nehruvian malignant attitude towards the Sikhs. At the time, he was being heckled by slogan shouters, *le ke rahenge Punjabi suba* we shall have Punjabi speaking province. Nehru was seized of "uncontrollable rage".[11]

The Sikhs were non-plussed at Nehru's treating the linguistic-reorganisation of Punjab within the Indian Union with the division of India in 1947 and coming into being of an independent Pakistan. The Punjabi-renegade Hindus were delighted and voted for Nehru's' Congress to the exclusion of Jan Sangh which had an electoral understanding with the Akalis in Punjab, Pepsu and Delhi. The Akalis were defeated by a combination of Hindu and Harijan vote in Punjab, but not in Pepsu.

The Congress won 45 per cent of total votes polled at the Centre and 42 per cent of the total in states, and in the words of Nehru's biographer, Michael Brecher, "more than half the ballots expressed discontent with Congress stewardship during the early years of the Indian Republic."[12] In India, with its multipronged geo-political and socio-cultural pluralism, proportionate representation as in Germany would have helped in proper reflection of the popular will in Parliament and Assemblies. But the system adopted instead was first past the pole which resulted even people forfeiting their security deposits for not getting prescribed minimum percentage of votes, being elected. That worked in favour of the Congress which got 362 out of 489 seats in Parliament and a

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working majority in all states except Madras, Orissa, PEPSU, and Travancore Cochin. The three-fourth majority gained by Nehru in Parliament was not legitimate or reflective of popular will. It was spurious in character, and unnecessarily bloated his head. It enabled him to tinkle with the Constitution without having clear mandate. That has been the bane of the Indian polity.

In Punjab, Partap Singh Kairon had the support of the Congress legislative party. But since a Sikh of whatever denomination was not yet acceptable to Punjabi-renegade Hindus, at Nehru's intervention Bhim Sen Sachar instead was inducted as Chief Minister.[13]

In Pepsu, the opposition members of legislature having an overall majority formed a United Front under the leadership of Gian Singh Rarewala of Shiromani Akali Dal but instead Col. Raghbir Singh of minority Congress was inducted as Chief Minister. -That only indicated that right from the inception of the electoral process, Congress with its illgotten, inflated, strength at the Centre, was not willing to respect the people's will

Col. Raghbir Singh was defeated on the very first day of the meeting of the Assembly over the election of Speaker and had to resign. Gian Singh Rarewala was sworn in as Chief Minister of United Front government on April 20,1952. He had the distinction of heading the first non-Congress government formed in an Indian state.

The United Front strategy indicated that Akalis were breaking the Congress efforts to contain them within the communal barriers. It augured well for national integration within the broad framework of composite Indian nationalism. Even otherwise, as Nehru's letters to Chief Ministers during the period indicate, Akalis were broadly supporting Hindu Mahasabha, Jan Sangh, Ram Rajya Parishad, and Rashtrya Swym Sewak Sangh on certain issues while Communists on the other. Similarly, Praja Socialist Party was supporting Akalis and others whom Nehru termed communal parties on certain issues and communists on the other. These types of alignments which indicated a politics of broad national consensus was beyond the comprehension of Nehru who termed them opportunistic.[14] It was another matter that Nehru, borrowing from opposition, was himself shortly afterwards aligned with the Church and later with the Muslim League in Kerala and reactionary feudal elements in Pepsu. What, however, matters is that this type of modus vivendi between diverse elements, which was essential for nation building, especially involving the Sikhs, was not acceptable to Nehru as these ran counter to Gandhi's legacy and his family heritage. Sectional interests overrode, rather subverted, the broader national interests.

The Central Government started day to day interference in the daily administration of Pepsu. For instance. Bhopinder Singh Man, a Pepsu Minister stated in October 1952 that the United Front Ministry was being prevented from inducting a Harijan member as Minister. Even Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, trainer of the Indian Constitution, in an interview with the *Spokesman* of November 17, 1952, deprecated the Central Government's violating the spirit of the Constitution by interference in Pepsu's administration. He stated, "It was never intended for the purposes it is being used by the Congress dominated Centre," and that all the efforts of the Central Government would be a calculated breach of the democratic conventions and traditions of fair play.

The Akali victory in Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) annual election on October 20, 1952, when their nominee Pritam Singh Khuranj was elected President came as a morale booster. Hukam Singh the same day stated in Calcutta, "the Sikhs stand for the redistribution of the present Punjab on a cultural and linguistic basis. We are opposed to a separate

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State for the Sikhs. The Sikhs are not getting a fair deal from the majority community." Addressing the All India Sikh Students Federation Conference in November he succinctly projected the Sikh demands: (a) That a Punjabi speaking area be demarcated on a purely cultural and linguistic basis, so as to preserve the Punjabi language and culture; (b) A just and equal treatment of the scheduled castes and no distinctions on account of religion; (c) Equal opportunities for all in public services.[15]

The first step towards formation of linguistic provinces was taken on December 19, 1952, when Nehru agreed to the formation of Andhra Province, following three days of rioting after Potti Sriramulu's death by fasting on this issue. Though Nehru had agreed to the formation of Andhra in 1949, it required Sriramulu's blood to force his hands.[16] Master Tara Singh, however, stated on December 30, 1952, that in view of the war clouds with Pakistan, the Sikhs could wait for sometime before pressing their demands.

By early 1953, when the Praja Parishad movement in Jammu was slackening, the Central Government thought of taking on the Akalis in the Punjab and Pepsu. As an opening gambit. Master Tara Singh was arrested in Amritsar on February 24, 1953, by Punjab Government for violating prohibitory orders. A couple of days earlier, he had addressed Nankana Sahib Martyrs Day celebrations.[17] Tara Singh's arrest was in sharp contrast to Congress party's resolution of January last on detention of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan in Pakistan. The Akalis in protest called for *Satyagraha* against interference in religious affairs.

Tara Singh's arrest was only a diversionary move. The real objective was removal of the non-Congress government in Pepsu. Chief Minister Rarewala, who had been unseated in February by the Election Tribunal, had the option under the law to continue as Chief Minister for six months before getting elected to the house, or the United Front could elect a new leader. But instead under draconian provisions of the new constitution, the Assembly was dissolved and state placed under President's rule on March 5.

The Akalis looked at these provisions as a blot on the federal structure. These helped turn the Central Government no less tyrannical than the imperial government under the British or the Mughals. Mr. Rao who was sent as an administrator by the Central Government did nothing but buttress such type of impression of the Government of India over the people by his partisan and imperious attitude. Elections to the new house were not held for almost a year, till Nehru was able to subvert the alignment of certain elements in the United Front and win them over. To Akalis, this looked more like imperial functions of Delhi, and that is what they mean by using the terminology *Delhi Durbar* over the years for the Central government.

Once the Government of India's operations in Pepsu were over, Punjab government promptly agreed to withdraw cases against Tara Singh. He was released on March 14. It was significant that Punjab government entered into an agreement with Akali Dal and assured it of non-interference in religious affairs of the Sikhs.[18]

The publication by the time of Khushwant Singh's book *The Sikhs* (London, Alien & Unwin) and his remarks, that he was hurrying up the writing of the Sikh history as the community would be out of existence by end of the century, caused glee to Nehruvian Congress Governments at the Centre and in the provinces, especially Punjab, Pepsu and U.P. It, however, caused deep annoyance to the Sikhs who joined issue with Khushwant Singh. In the ensuing debate, Khushwant Singh contended that he was basing his surmise on Indian Government's ceasing enforcement of

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regimental orders requiring the Sikhs in the armed forces to keep their Khalsa symbols as required by the British. Also, in his mind was the discriminatory policies being pursued by the Congress government towards the Sikhs in civil and military employment.[19] These and some other factors made Khushwant Singh feel that Sikhism will be overwhelmed by Brahminism.

It came by way of an assurance to Jawaharlal Nehru and other Congress leaders including Punjabi-renegade Hindus, that the policies they were pursuing were correct and should be persisted upon to yield the desired results. This came as a stiffener, if one was required, to Nehru's continuous hostile attitude towards the Sikhs and their aspirations.

This was quite reflected in Nehru's choice of personnel for the States Reorganisation Commission set up on December 29, 1953, as we shall see later.

Meanwhile on December 13, 1953, Government of India announced elections to PEPSU and Travancore-Cochin to be held in the first week of March 1954. Nehru went to the historic shrine of Fatehgarh Sahib, marking the site of martyrdom of two younger sons of Guru Gobind Singh, betrayed to the Mughals by his ancestor, Gangu Brahmin.[20] The congregation in unison raised slogans in favour of Punjabi Suba, and refused to listen to Nehru who blamed Gian Singh Rarewala for organising the people's resentment. He also blamed Master Tara, Singh for not intervening to restore calm.[21] Chastened, Nehru left without making any speech. He did not realise that pretending to be a secular leader, he had no business to be in a Sikh shrine and convert the martyrdom congregation into an election meeting.[22]

In the 1954 elections. Congress in Pepsu was aligned with reactionary elements - princes and landlords - and in Travancore-Cochin with the Church. In Travancore-Cochin, the United Front of leftists defeated the Congress but in Pepsu the Congress had won over elements from within United Front and fractured the Akali Dal. The breakway mercenary Akali faction, led by Sampuram Singh Raman, established Shiromani Riasti Akali Dal in end-1953, and caused triangular contests causing victory of the Congress which secured 37 out of 60 seats.[23] Nehru had learnt initial lessons, to divide the opposition and in case of Punjab to cause schism in the Sikhs as well.

By the time, political elements in various parts of India were mobilising themselves and preparing their memorandums for the States Reorganisation Commission (SRC) consisting of Fazal Ali, then Governor of Orissa as Chairman, Pandit H.N. Kunzru and Sardar K.M. Panikkar, both of whom had expressed themselves against states reorganisation, as Members.

In northern India, there was polarisation of opinion around linguistic reorganisation of the area vis a vis amalgamation of three states of Punjab, Pepsu and Himachal with or without the addition of some parts of western U.P.

Since central Congress leadership was following an unprincipled policy on linguistic reorganisation in northern India, the Congressmen were permitted to present their viewpoint to the SRC in their, individual capacity. This led to a curious alignment on the two sides.

Those who stood in favour of the linguistic reorganisation o states in northern India were Shiromani Akali Dal, Praja Socialist Party, Communist Party of India, broadly Sikh Congressmen ii Punjab, State Congress Committees and State Governments of Himachal and Delhi, who asked for formation of Himachal Pradesh and Greater Delhi, besides Hindu Congressmen and other leaders

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from Haryana like Prof Sher Singh, Pandit Sri Ram Sharma and a host of others - a get together of a cross section of forces.

On the other side those who favoured merger of Punjab, Pepsu and Himachal with or without parts of U.P. were broadly the forces of Hindu right reaction or Hindu chauvinism represented by Hindu Mahasabha, Jan Sangh, and Arya Samaj who had the support of Punjab Hindu Congressmen and Punjab government, and above all of Jawaharlal Nehru, the doyen of anti-Sikhism.[24]

Akali Dal asked for formation of Punjabi speaking state consisting of (a) entire Jalandhar Division, (b) large parts of Ambala Division -Ambala district, Karnal district minus Panipat Tehsil, and Sirsa, Fatehabad and Tohana area of Hissar district, (c) entire Pepsu with the exception of Jind and Narwana tehsils, and (d) Ganga Nagar district of Rajasthan. That would give the state an area of 3500 square miles and a population of 12 million of which the Sikhs would constitute 40 percent. Caste Hindus under 40 percent, and Scheduled Castes who would play a balancing role over 20 percent.

Praja Socialist Party asked for *Pahari* State consisting of *Pahari* speaking areas of Punjab, Pepsu and certain districts of U.P.; Greater Delhi or Haryana State comprising Hindi speaking areas of Punjab, Pepsu and certain districts of Agra and Meerut divisions of U.P.; and Punjab containing contiguous areas of Punjab and Pepsu. Jaya Prakash Narayan also warned all the parties against suppressing the language question.

Hindus of Haryana spoke against 'Hindu urban exploiter class of Jalandhar' seeking to sabotage the formation of Haryana State. So was the case with Dr. Y.S. Parmar, then Chief Minister of Himachal, who spoke of backwardness of his people who had a different language, culture, customs, manners and a distinct social order, different from the people of Punjab.

Chaudhary Brahm Perkash, Chief Minister of Delhi, distinguished himself in advocating formation of Greater Delhi, a jat heartland consisting of Delhi, Haryana and parts of western U.P., separated from each other as a punishment for participation in the revolt of 1857.

The demands of Punjabi speaking state, Himachal and Greater Delhi or Haryana or Jat Heartland were complementary in character.

The demand for Maha Punjab or Greater Punjab by merger of Punjab, Pepsu, and Himachal with or without parts of U.P., emanated from a desire to save Jalandhar Division urban Hindus from unenviable position in which they found themselves. They described Punjabi speaking state as the one designed to make the Sikhs "the real power in the state", as if that was a crime. The Punjab government also advocated formation of Greater Punjab.

Jawaharlal Nehru as also Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant, then Un ion Home Minister, perturbed at Chaudhary Brahm Perkash's move for formation of Greater Delhi, a Jat heartland, which sought division of U.P. and cut at the roots of Brahmin-Bania hegemony moved with alacrity in having him removed from Chief Ministership of Delhi. He was replaced by Gurmukh Nihal Singh, then Speaker, and pet in Centre's hands. That was also portent of things to follow.

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Jawaharlal Nehru while briefing the members of the SRC had decried the demand for Punjabi speaking state inter alia as a demand for 'Sikh State' wherein the Sikhs would be in majority. Sardar K.M. Panikkar had developed serious reservations about the Sikhs as head of Akali Sahayak Bureau in 1923-24,[25] and needed no briefing. Pandit Hriday Nath Kunzru, a Hindu enthusiast betrayed his guilty conscience at Commission's sitting at Patiala on April 18, 1955, when Hukam Singh was making submissions. Kunzru when told by Hukam Singh to exclude Ganga Nagar, Kangra and some other areas if he thought those were not Punjabi speaking ones, in the words of Hukam Singh's biographer, "unintendedly and unconsciously observed that the rest would become a Sikh majority area. S. Hukam Singh quick-wittedly retorted: 'the cat has come out of the bag'. He referred to the idiom '*Chor ki dahri men tinka*' ('Straw in thief s beard') to stress that Pandit Kunzru had a guilty conscience. If the Commission was to abide by the directions given to them by the government, that in no case should there be a state in which the Sikhs should have a majority then there was no point in arguing his case. This observation made the position of the Commission embarrassing. The President had to apologise. He said that the Member had not intended to offend the Sikh's feelings. But there could not be any other interpretation of the remarks made by Pandit Kunzru."[26]

The report of the Commission on Punjabi speaking state was malefic and a foregone conclusion.

Early in 1955, election to the SGPC were fought on the issue of Punjabi speaking state. The Congress party because of its skin deep commitment to secularism organised Khalsa Dal to fight the Gurdwara elections. It set up candidates on 132 seats. The people naturally asked, why should Congress with its commitment to secularism, fight Gurdwara elections? The utilisation of official machinery and the state patronage had its counter effect. The Khalsa Dal lost all but 3 seats. The Akalis won all 112 seats they contested, with 20 seats going to Desh Bhagat Board, an anachronistic organ set up by the Communists who, however, were aligned with the Akalis and supported them on Punjabi Suba. The SGPC elections came as a morale booster to the Akalis.

Sachar now sought to involve Master Tara Singh in unnecessary controversies. Firstly, after holding talks with Tara Singh, on SGPC matters, he quoted out of context certain observations made by him and said that what Tara Singh wanted was a Sikh state. That was nothing but a repetition of the Congress or Hindu ploy. Secondly, he imposed a ban on raising of all slogans in Amritsar including slogan for Punjabi *Suba* in connection with states reorganisation effective from April 6, 1955, through District Magistrate Amritsar.[27]

Akali Dal took it as a question of civic rights. In a resolution adopted on April 24, 1955, it wanted the government to withdraw the ban by May 10, failing that they would violate the prohibitory orders and court arrests. Chief Minister Sachar was in two minds, but Nehru and Union Home Minister, Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant wanted the Punjab government to face the threatened Akali agitation.[28] As in February 1949, Nehru was again the prime mover in determining the negative course of Punjab politics.

A day before courting arrest, Tara Singh stated that, "The present anti-Sikh attitude of the urbanite Punjabi Hindus, led by the Arya Samaj and the Congress is unnatural," and was result of encouragement by the government. Further that, "The fundamental cultural and social relations of the Sikhs and the Hindus are so deep that they will always live as twin brothers."[29] That was a

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questionable proposition in the eyes of Gandhiites and not acceptable to Nehru who was bent upon creating schism between the two to serve his political and other ends.

Tara Singh along with others was arrested on May 10, for violating prohibitory orders. That marked the start of the *Morcha*, agitation. Every morning a batch of 20 to 50 volunteers after seeking blessings of the *Akal Takht* offered themselves for arrest near the gate of Guru Ram Das Serai. They raised four slogans, "*Sat Sri Akal* - God is Truth", *Punjabi Suba Zindabad*, *Hindu-Sikh Ekta* (*unity*)*Zindabad*, and *Haryana Prant Zindabad*.

The agitation received wide support from a cross section of people. A convention on June 7, 1955, at Delhi attended, inter alia, by Kidar Nath Sehgal and Sri Ram Sharma both of Janta Congress, Sohan Singh Josh and Harkishan Singh Surjeet both of Communist Party of India, Chaudhary Chandar Bhan of Zamindara League and Randhir Singh of Praja Socialist Party expressed support to the movement and termed the government ban unconstitutional.

The agitation reached its peak in the beginning of July when a large number of volunteers from various parts reached the Golden Temple, Amritsar. The organisers raised the number of volunteers courting arrest to 100 per day. The authorities cordoned off the Golden Temple area and Punjab government cancelled the arms licences of the SGPC for protection of historic jewellery in the Golden Temple. The police entered the precincts of the Temple on July 4, closed *Guru Ka Langar* (Guru's Kitchen) by taking away utensils etc, raided Guru Ramdas Serai and arrested Head Priests of Akal Takht and Golden Temple. The police also raided the office of Akali Dal next to Guru Ramdas Serai, and used teargas shells to disperse the volunteers gathered in *parikarma* of the Holy Shrine. Some of the shells fell within the *sarovar*, holy tank. That was the first sacrilege committed by the Congress government after independence. The troops were put on a flag march at first throughout the streets of Amritsar and then within the precincts of the Golden Temple to overawe the people.

As the *morcha* got momentum, Nehru lost his equipoise. He said on May 28, that it was "vulgar, highly improper, unwarranted, nonsensical, obnoxious and born of parochialism". He must have used a thesaurus to collect epithets expressive of his accumulated hatred for the Sikhs. The troops prevented holding of *Diwan* in Manji Sahib and took positions in front of the SGPC office. It must have had the approval of the Central Government.

The sacrilege sent a shock wave and obviously things were on verge of going out of control. Nehru by the time on visit to Britain, after an extended tour to the Soviet Union, was tauntingly asked by western journalists about his preaching *panchsheel* all over, when a minority back at home was being put to jail over a trivial issue. Cut to the quick, Nehru wanted Sachar to discontinue the arrests.

Sachar on July 12, to mark, in his words, "Nehru's triumphal return from peace mission abroad", sought to restore peace at home and lifted the ban on shouting of slogans. Akali Dal handsomely responded by not celebrating the occasion as victory against the government.[30]

Partap Singh Kairon, Development Minister, in Sachar's cabinet, who right from 1947 had been aligned with the most reactionary Arya Samajist elements in the Punjab Congress, argued that Sachar instead of lifting the ban, should have allowed it to expire in another two days, letting 12,000 Akali volunteers to remain in Jail.

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Sachar caved in. Instead of their release, the drama of trial of detenues now started. And, they were sentenced to various terms of imprisonment varying from 4 months to 10 days. Eventually in view of the expectance of the SRC report, the detenues as also Master Tara Singh who had been sentenced to 4 months imprisonment and fine of Rs. 400 were released on September 15.

Later, when Sachar went to the Golden Temple to apologise for hurting the susceptibilities of the Sikh people, Kairon sent emissaries to Nehru and Pant to argue that Sachar had inadvertently lent support to the Akalis. Thus he endeared himself to the custodians of Hindu chauvinism.

The report of the SRC in end-September 1955 recommending merger of Punjab, Pepsu and Himachal came as a rude shock to the Sikhs. The minority reports, one by Fazal Ali for retention of Himachal as a separate unit, and the other by Sardar K.M. Panikkar for division of Uttar Pradesh (U.P.) into two, possibly three states - Eastern, Western and Hill Areas - suggested that but for direct pressure on the Commission, not to agree to formation of Punjabi speaking state under any circumstances, the SRC could have come out in favour of linguistic reorganisation of Northern India, into Punjab, Greater Delhi or Jat Province, and Himachal. As such, the Commission was influenced by extraneous considerations on the Punjab, otherwise, it could have held that the denial of their mother tongue by Jalandhar Division Urban Hindus was communal, fissiparous and destructive of national values.

Even Nehru's official biographer, S. Gopal opines, that the report "revealed, it must be said, no basis or logic or principles. It recommended the establishment as separate provinces of Kerala and Karnataka because of the common language of the people; but Bombay would continue as a Bilingual province, including people speaking Marathi and Gujarati."[31] Gopal fights shy of mentioning of injustice done to Punjabi language whose very existence, despite its acceptance as one of the 14 languages in the constitution, was denied by communal elements with Nehru's active support.

Tara Singh dubbed the Commission's report as "a decree of Sikh annihilation." He made pathetic appeal to the Sikhs at the calamity that had befallen them. He called an All Parties and Organisations Convention on October 16, at Amritsar. It in its main resolution stated, "So far as Sikhs are concerned, they want security and a sense of freedom from aggressive communalism, but the commission instead of giving them any relief. . . has, rather delivered the Sikhs bound hand and foot to the slavery of an aggressive communal dominant group. . . . The simplest solution, therefore, was to form a State based on the integration of officially recognised and demarcated Punjabi-speaking areas of Punjab and Pepsu." It recalled the "full and unstinted support to the Congress at the critical and crucial stage in 1946-47 in Indian history" by the Sikhs and urged the Central Government "to do their duty to the Sikhs."[32]

As resolved, a deputation consisting of Master Tara Singh, Bhai Jodh Singh, Gain Singh Rarewala, Giani Kartar Singh and Hukam Singh called on October 24, on Pandit Nehru who had with him Maulana Azad and Pandit Pant. That marked the start of parleys between the two sides.

Since the Congress session was scheduled to be held in Amritsar in December 1955, the Akalis and the protagonists of Maha Punjab -Jan Sangh, Hindu Mahasabha, Arya Samaj and others including Hindu Congressites - started making corresponding preparations for demonstration of respective strength. The Congress session was eventually held in February 1956.

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We cannot do better than quote the eye witness account of Michael Brecher, a keen observer:

> On a bright, cool north Indian morning the contending groups massed their forces in a show of strength, especially for the benefit of the Congress High Command which was camped close by. First came the Sikhs in the most impressive - and peaceful - demonstration I have ever seen. Hour after hour and mile after mile they marched, eight abreast, down the main street of Amritsar, a hallowed name in Indian nationalism because of shootings of 1919. Old and young, men and women, they came in an endless stream, most with an expression of determination and sadness in the eyes, many still remembering the ghastly days of 1947 when their homeland was cut in two and hundreds of thousands fled before the Muslims, and when thousands of their co-religionists died or were maimed. What strength there was in the appearance of the older men who, with their flowing beards, *looked like the Hebrew prophets of old!* Many carried their traditional sword, the *kirpan*, and many wore blue turbans, symbol of Sikh militancy. They had come from the villages and towns of the Punjab and from far-off places as well. Almost without exception they marched in orderly file, portraying their unity of purpose. At intervals came the resounding cry, 'Punjabi Suba Zindabad' (Long Live a Punjabi State) and Master Tara Singh Zindabad, with intermittent music to enliven the proceedings. On they came, for five hours. *Few who watched them could doubt their genuine fear of being swallowed up in the vice-like embrace of rabid Hinduism.* By conservative estimate they numbered over 100,000. To this observer it seemed more like double that figure.
>
> The Maha Punjab Front display was very much smaller, perhaps 50,000. But this was far larger than anticipated. A friend who watched this parade - in a fruitful division of labour - described it as 'nasty and Nazi', no less orderly than the Sikh show but *with a militancy resembling pictures of Hitler Jugend.*

Brecher avers that Nehru was aware of power of Hindu communalism "to strike for power and Hindu *Raj*" but his "attack is verbal in the main". He went on to add that "Nehru was sympathetic to Sikh fears but was reported by friends to be *under strong pressure from communalist-minded Hindu Congressmen* who were not prepared to place the Punjabi Hindus in an inferior position."[33]

Tara Singh's address on the occasion was pathetic. Precisely, he said, "We must rise and attract the attention of the people of the world to our noble principles, or die as traitors to our Gurus. . . I am bound hand and foot and some of my Punjabi Hindu brothers insist upon keeping us in our present bondage. They do not want to give us the advantage of the freedom which they have gained. *They do not trust us, and I do not know how to gain their; confidence.* A most complicated and dangerous situation is facing us, but we are not realising it. . . . I cry for Hindu Sikh unity and some Punjabi Hindu spokesmen reply *unity could be attained by me only if we submit. I cry for equality, brotherhood and unity, and they offer me slavery and death. . .*"[34]

Only last month, the proponents of Hindu chauvinism in the Congress had agreed to replace Bhim Sen Sachar by a Sikh Chief Minister, Partap Singh Kairon, who had, as stated earlier, since 1947 been working in close alignment with Hindu chauvinists in the Punjab Congress. As for significance of the change, one can't do better than quote Herr Hitler, whom Nehru describes as "an expert in compelling others to submit to his yoke."[35] In the words of Hitler,

> We must not expect embodiments of characterless submission suddenly. . . until the notion is either once and for all accustomed to its slave's yoke, or until better forces push to the surface to wrest power from the infamous corrupters. In the first case these people continue to feel not at all badly since they not infrequently are entrusted by the victors with the office of slave overseer, which these characterless types then exercise over their own nation and that generally more heartlessly than any alien beast imposed by the enemy himself.[36]

Verily, for Jawaharlal Nehru and Punjabi-renegade Hindus, Kairon was the 'slave overseer. . . more heartless than any alien beast' for the next eight years of Nehru regime to suppress the Sikhs and their aspirations.

Nehru came out of the Amritsar Congress badly jolted at the quantum of the Sikh discontent. The glare of international press tended to project it on the international arena. This helped to add earnestness to the negotiations that had come to a grinding halt.

These resulted in the central government's firm offer of the Regional Formula, a brainchild of Hukam Singh.[37] The negotiations had earlier been obstructed to by Pandit Pant. And, when Hukam Singh had gone to Maulana Azad to talk about lack of progress because of Pant's obduracy, Azad had stated, "*Bhai* (Brother) Hukum Singh, I am helpless. I cannot do anything. Pandit Pant is a pucca Hindu (*achha khasa Hindu hai*)."[38]

A firm offer of the Regional Plan was made to the Akalis in early March 1956, to take it or leave it basis. It was discussed by senior leaders of the party on March 8, at Hukam Singh's residence in Delhi, and by the General Committee of the Akali Dal at Amritsar on March 11, 1956. It was explained that the regional councils shall have statutory powers on all subjects except law and order, finance and taxation. The regional, including court and official language shall be Punjabi in Gurmukhi script - Sachar and Pepsu formulaes being applicable in respective areas. The present discrimination in Sikh and Hindu scheduled castes would be removed on all India basis and the government would explore enactment of Gurdwara Act on all India basis.[39]

Giani Kartar Singh was for acceptance of the Regional Formulae as a stepping stone to Punjabi-speaking state. Rarewala, Hukam Singh and Bawa Harkishan Singh gave unstinted support though there were differences in their nuances. The younger sections including Sarup Singh of All India Sikh Students Federation were bitterly opposed to it; Principal Satbir Singh who spoke against it in the General Committee meeting was hooted down.[40] The Haryana leaders who attended the General Body meeting by special invitation were for acceptance of the Regional Formulae.

Master Tara Singh though not satisfied with the formulae indicated that he was not willing to carry on the fight or do any thing that could cause split in the party. He explained that there was a lot of distrust against the Sikhs and there was need for its removal.[41] He, later, in the daily *Akali* of March 26, 1956, laid emphasis on Hindu-Sikh unity, removal of tension between the two, little realising that unity could not be achieved or tension removed, unless both sides wanted it.

Already on March 20, with the tacit approval of Master Tara Singh and of the Akali Working Committee, Hukam Singh had been elected Deputy Speaker of Lok Sabha. This was the first time that the office of Deputy Speaker was conferred on a member of the opposition, though Ajit Singh

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Sarhadi would make us believe that it was quid pro quo for Hukum Singh's role in the formulation of the Regional Formulae that led to the merger of Akali Dal with the Congress.[42]

That the regional formulae was not unfair could be gauged from the fact that it caused equal dismay and distress to both the Sikh and the Hindu masses. The Akali youth were on the verge of a revolt, in rejecting both the Regional Formulae and the established Akali leader-ship. But the bitter reaction amongst the Hindus made them to think over that there must be something that had caused such an adverse reaction in the other party. That helped Master Tara Singh to retain his leadership unharmed.

Then there were Punjabi-renegade Hindus - members of Jan Sangh, Hindu Mahasabha, Rashtriya Swym Sewak Sangh and of Arya Samaj functioning at political level through the Congress, aptly termed by Satya Mehta Rai as 'Hindu communalists'[43], who were not willing to budge an inch from their position. The evolving of Regional Formulae caused them dismay. As Diwan Alakh Dhari of Maha Punjab Samiti later explained, "The hard core of the Plan is embedded in the quagmire of acquired supremacy for Sikhs in selected areas of Punjab."[44] It evoked stiff opposition. The Hindu communalists felt that the game they had won through the SRC report was being lost. They were not willing to accept Hindi being made the second language in the proposed Punjabi region. They questioned the rationale for imposition of Punjabi on the Hindi region and also highlighted the under-development of Haryana vis a vis the Punjabi region. This enabled them to line up the people of Haryana who were suffering from the syndrome of discrimination on their side.

The Maha Punjabis wanted the central government to withdraw the Regional Scheme or call for a round table conference. They threatened direct action if a satisfaction was not found by June 17, 1956. The Central Government did neither, except to resort to "the old British pattern of divide and rule in the name of communal amity."[45] Arya Samaj raised the, slogan of 'Hindi in danger'. Earlier, Dewan Alakh Dhari and Maha Punjab Samiti were willing to accept Punjabi 'our mother tongue' but only in Dev Nagri script.[46] The Hindu communalists were not sure whether to own their mother tongue partially or completely.

It led to polarisation of forces within the Congress, sharply dividing Hindu and Sikh members. Fourteen members of the Congress legislature party, including Jagat Narain, Ralla Ram, Suraj Bhan, Sita Devi, Sher Singh and Vaid Ram Dayal resigned from the Congress membership on the language issue.[47] Jagat Narain had already earned sufficient notoriety for his communal writings while still being General Secretary of the Punjab Congress. The Congress in Punjab was ruptured but continued to include mutually hostile elements.

The debate in Punjab Assembly over the draft States Reorganisation Bill showed the communal cleavage in Punjabi region except that Kairon was for scuttling the Regional Formule. By the time, when some of the Hindu communalists were leaving the Congress, Akal is were thinking of joining it to work out the Regional Formulae. The proposal was still at preliminary stage when Gian Singh Rarewala stabbed them in the front with his statement in early June that after accepting the Regional Formulae there was no need for the separate political existence of Akali Dal.[48] The Working Committee of Akali Dal on June 7 deprecated Rarewala's statement. Nonetheless, Rarewala and his followers joined Congress in August 1956. It accelerated the pace of negotiations between Giani Kartar Singh and Hukam Singh on the one hand and Maulana Azad and Congress President U.N. Dhebar on the other. By the end of August, the two sides had agreed that Akali Dal

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should confine itself to social, religious and cultural work and shun political activity. From exchange of letters between Giani Kartar Singh and Maulana Azad in September it was clear that the Akalis retained the inherent right to agitate in case the Sikhs were subjected to discrimination or grave injustice.[49]

The Akali Dal working committee on September 30, 1956, second time since independence, resolved to eschew political activity.[50] Tara Singh had earlier in the day been to Jawaharlal Nehru who "settled all issues by saying that Master Tara Singh's honour was his own thereafter."[50] The ratification of the decision by the general body in November when States Reorganisation Bill was enacted, only showed the pathetic state to which the Sikhs had reduced themselves at the time when, for the first time in their history, the Sikhs in Punjab were unified under one administration. There was void in the Sikh leadership.

Elections were around the corner in early 1957. Efforts to bring reconciliation between Tara Singh and Kairon proved abortive. The cooption of Giani Kartar Singh, Hukam Singh and Ajit Singh Sarhadi to the Punjab Election Board proved of no avail, without there being a clear cut understanding as to the number of ex-Akalis to be accommodated. Tara Singh expected that he would be consulted in selection of Akali-entrants and others in Punjab. He was ignored and his position, in the words of Hukam Singh, was that of an injured tiger. He called on Dhebar and in frustration asked for exclusion of Kairon and Rarewala from being given tickets to the Punjab Assembly.[52] That was all an exercise in futility. Eventually, former Akalis got only 24 seats in the Punjab Assembly as against their expectations of 40, and 3 seats in Parliament. That brought to an end Tara Singh's entente with the Congress leadership and left the field clear for Kairon.

Kairon's reinduction as Chief Minister in early April 1957, with two erstwhile Akalis, Giani Kartar Singh and Rarewala as Ministers, was immediately followed by "Save Hindi agitation". Sponsored by Hindu communalists under the auspices of Arya Samaj with a view to defeat the functioning of Regional Formulae, it had Swami Atma Nand as Dictator. It was one of the most lousy agitations in the sub-continent. The saffron clad Swamis who, in the words of Balraj Sahni, did not bestir themselves during the British colonial rule, now marshalled themselves to impose, what Frank Anthony called, 'Hindi Imperialism'. And since Hindus from Punjab were not willing to offer arrests, they marshalled people from far and wide - the Hindi heartland, especially Madhya Pradesh, to offer themselves for, to use Gandhian terminology, *Duragraha*.

The Punjab administration pursued a policy of appeasement of Hindu warlords in sharp contrast to Punjabi Suba-slogan agitation in 1955. The Hindi-Hindu agitators got royal treatment as members of the ruling race. The net impact of this year-and-a-half long agitation was that it enabled Kairon and his minions to stall the implementation of Regional Formulae, and eventually tone down what were conceived to be miniature legislatures, to ineffectual sub-committees of the Punjab legislature. That was after Kairon's heart and than of his mentors.

Kairon government's apathy at the violence of militant Swamis and refusal to arrest them was equally matched by Tara Singh's misunderstanding of the historical forces at work. His pathetic appeal on July 15, 1957, recalling Guru Tegh Bahadur's and Guru Gobind Singh's sacrifices for Hindu *dharma* was misplaced.[53] The real character of Hindus, since liberated after centuries of slavery, was quite discernible from the quantum of sacrilege against Sikhism - throwing of cigarette boxes in sacred tanks, tearing of *Gurbani Gutkas* and discarding the leaves in Bazars, shearing of

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keshas of sleeping Sikhs, and desecration of Sikh places of worship that cropped up as a result of the agitation. The movement was more anti-Sikh than anti-government.[54]

The Sikhs started counter marshalling against 'Save Hindi agitation'. They sponsored complete hartal on August 22, 1957. Akali Dal on September 7, warned the government against encouraging hooliganism by yielding to it or trying to placate it. It also called upon the Sikhs to gird up their loins to meet the dangerous situation.[55] Nehru on September 14, for once, perceptibly observed that the Arya Samajist agitation "whether it succeeds or fails" would disintegrate Punjab. The agitation was suspended on December 23, 1957, when all detainees, unlike those of Punjabi Suba-slogan agitation, were released.

By the time there was covert move by Punjab government to sabotage the Regional Formulae. The Regional Committees were not constituted till November 1957 i.e. for eight months. Then surfaced a serious split in the Congress with Prabodh Chandra complaining of high-handedness and corruption on part of the Chief Minister. The High Command found substance in Kairon's sons and nephews serving as alternate centres of power. Kairon agreed to pay the price by appeasement of Hindu communalists and ditching the Regional Formulae. At his instance, Gurdial Singh Dhillon, Speaker, equated the Regional Committees to ordinary committees of the Assembly. Kairon won over Hindus, his mentors, and drove Akalis to a showdown with the government which helped him clinch the issue of his indispensability.[56]

Kairon won the vote of confidence from the legislative party on June 5, 1958, after Nehru, a day earlier, termed the charges of corruption as "foolish, frivolous and absurd" even though the Congress Parliamentary Board had fixed on Kairon the constructive responsibility for actions of his relatives. Kairon, as quid pro quo, decided to change the texture of Sikh institutions and 'secularise' them.[57]

Tara Singh was still willing to accept Regional Formulae if it were implemented. That was obvious at the first Punjabi Suba Conference held in Amritsar on October 12, 1958, under auspices of Sant Fateh Singh, Vice President of the Akali Dal. Kairon at the instance of Central Government signalled Giani Kartar Singh to initiate steps including winning over of Communist Sadh Sangat Board to oust Master Tara Singh from Presidentship of the SGPC. He did this so on annual elections on November 16, 1958, by 77 to 74 votes. The Gurdwara Bill was amended in January 1959 integrating the PEPSU Gurdwaras into the SGPC administration, when hand-picked members from PEPSU were nominated to the SGPC, consolidating anti-Tara Singh forces. But in the long run this was a progressive step as it brought all Sikh shrines in former Punjab and Pepsu under one administration.[58]

Tara Singh regarded the whole going on as an infringement of Congress-Akali accord on government's non-interference in the Gurdwara affairs. He met Nehru on January 2, 1959, to ask for arbitration on the issue. Akali Dal also decided to revive its political activity. Tara Singh decided to take a silent procession in Delhi on March 15, 1959. The Punjab government arrested him a day earlier. It also cancelled special train and permits for buses hired to transport the Akalis from Punjab to Delhi for the silent procession. Several arrests were made at Ludhiana and other places. This uncalled for action whipped much enthusiasm in taking out the mammoth silent procession from Parade Ground, Delhi at 11 a.m. to Gurdwara Rakab Ganj at 5 p.m. by the people estimated at 50,000 to 300,000. Tara Singh was released on March 21, 1959, and thereafter got Nehru's letter rejecting the arbitration asked for.[59]

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The following day, Tara Singh deprecated the use of Gurdwaras as a ladder for political ambitions and wanted members of legislatures being barred from contesting the Gurdwara elections. Nehru and Kairon were approached in turn to seize the opportunity to separate politics from religion but since Congressites had religious ambitions and Congressite Sikhs were in power in the SGPC, the suggestion was negatived for short term gains.

On March 27, 1959, Akali Dal again asked Nehru to agree to arbitration on the question of government interference in the Gurdwara affairs. He suggested Jaya Prakash Narayan, or C. Rajagopalachari, or Vinoba Bhave as an arbitrator. But Nehru again, on April 5, rejected arbitration in the matter.[60]

Tara Singh threatened to go on fast from April 16, 1959. That made Nehru to invite him to tea on April 11, 1959. The talks resulted in Nehru-Tara Singh Pact. Nehru agreed in principle to government's non-interference in the Gurdwara affairs. A four member committee representing equally the Punjab government and Master Tara Singh set up to consider allegations of government interference in Gurdwara affairs, came to naught.

Master Tara Singh took the next step on May 7, 1959, when he announced to fight the forthcoming elections to the SGPC in January 1960 over the issue of Punjabi Suba. The Congressite Sikhs earnestly took up the challenge. Kairon sponsored a Sadh Sangat Board to fight the Gurdwara elections. They never realized the baneful effect of mixing of politics with religion. Giani Kartar Singh even resigned his Ministership on October 24, 1959, to devote full time to Gurdwara elections.

The decision to bifurcate the composite state of Bombay into two states of Maharashtra and Gujarat on December 23, 1959, had an electronic effect on the Sikhs as now Punjab was the only bilingual state left. Nehru stated on December 31, 1959, at Delhi that the dominant language of the entire Punjab was Punjabi, though Hindi was spoken in some parts. But keeping in view his inert style of functioning, he could not proceed further to give it a tangible shape. Verily, "Nehru relied too much on the correct decision turning up and did not set out to find it."[61] The Punjab Governments' setting up a 26 member Language Committee under governor N.V. Gadgil was untimely and unproductive.

In the Gurdwara elections in January 1960, the Akalis swept the polls securing 136 seats with 4 going to the Sadh Sangat Board. The Communist sponsored Desh Bhagat Board which had played a retrogressive role was wiped out.

In tune with the new mandate, Tara Singh and new members of the SGPC took a pledge on January 24 , 1960, at Akal Takht to sacrifice their *tan*, *man*, *dhan*, (body, soul and material wealth) for achieving Punjabi Suba. The same day Tara Singh called upon the Congress High Command to see the writing on the wall and concede the demand for Punjabi Suba, or he would be forced to resort to agitation. In March, Akali Dal called upon all those who had joined the Congress in or after 1956 at its direction, to resign from the Congress and its Committees. Only five Akali M.L.A.s out of 24, and none from the three MPs, came out of the Congress. These were Sarup Singh, Atma Singh, Harguranad Singh, Udham Singh and Master Partap Singh. On April 3, Tara Singh resigned from the post of President of SGPC to which he had been elected on March 7, to devote his full time to

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the movement for attainment of Punjabi Suba. There was no let up in discrimination against the Sikhs especially in Terai area of U.P. which also gave fillip to the movement.

Tara Singh moved in measured paces to force the issue. To begin with, he called a Punjabi Suba convention at Amritsar on May 22, 1960, to demonstrate bipartisan support for the cause. Pandit Sunder Lal, renowned revolutionary, presided. Dr. Saifuddin Kitchlu of Martial Law fame and once a prominent Congress leader inaugurated the Conference.[62] Then there were persons from all communities from Swatantra Party, Praja Socialist Party and Samyukta Socialist Party. It was also addressed by K.G. Jodh, General Secretary of All India Linguistic States Conference.[63]

The next step was taking out of a peaceful procession at Delhi on June 12. Tara Singh planned to start on May 29, martyrdom anniversary of Guru Arjan Dev, from Amritsar to marshall support on the way.

These Akali moves came timely for Kairon, then passing through a difficult phase. He had been charged by senior members of the Congress Assembly Party who submitted a memorandum to the Congress High Command, of dictatorial attitude and of charges of corruption, nepotism and favouritism. The Judgement of the Punjab High Court in Karnal murder case in which strictures were passed against Kairon and his cohorts for concocting the case was glaring.[64]

Kairon seized the opportunity, and provoked Akali agitation by arresting Master Tara Singh along with 200 Akali leaders and workers on May 24, all over the Punjab. Tara Singh was held under Preventive Detention Act while others under section 107/151 of Criminal Procedure Code. The magistracy demanded bail amounts of Rs. 50,000 to Rs. 100,000. The *jatha* of 11 without Tara Singh sent to Delhi on May 29 was arrested too, outside Amritsar. Police let loose a reign of terror, with false cases being concocted against Akali sympathisers. Kairon thus was able to force Akalis to launch an agitation, second time in six years, when from May 30, a *jatha* of 11 Akalis each would move to Delhi and offer arrests outside Darbar Sahib, Amritsar.[65]

Kairon's sealing of the offices and press of pro-Akali dailies, *Parbhat* (*Urdu*) and *Akali* (*Punjabi*) and arresting their staff members evoked protest from All India Journalists Association as an attack on freedom of the press. Kairon relented and the newspapers resumed their publication.[66]

The procession at Delhi was banned and its borders sealed to prevent ingress of the Sikhs. The congregation held at Gandhi Grounds near Gurdwara Sis Ganj by the Sikhs of Delhi was disrupted by the police on June 12, 1960. Thousands of Sikhs, collected in front of the Gurdwara, were subjected to lathi charge and tear gas shells. These resulted, according to some sources, in seven deaths and a thousand injured.[67] Then, there was a list of 258 persons found missing. Police was believed to have secretly burnt truckload of bodies of those dead and not yet dead. The question of police atrocities came up before Indian Jurists, and had its echo in the U.N. General Assembly with Foreign Minister of South Africa articulating the inhuman excesses. About two thousand Akalis were arrested. The Sikhs were hounded everywhere in cafes, restaurants, shops. Even passersby were not spared so much so that Congressmen like Giani Kartar Singh who had just bitterly fought Tara Singh in the gurdwara elections, condemned the police excesses.

Delhi opened second front of the *morcha* for Panjabi Suba with Rachhpal Singh, President of Akali Dal, as dictator, and offered 11 arrests daily.

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Sant Fateh Singh took over as dictator of the *morcha*, agitation, at Amritsar after Tara Singh's arrest, competently organised the agitation and by July 25, 1960, as many as 17,821 Akalis had been arrested in Amritsar alone. The 3-man committee consisting of K.M. Munshi, N.C. Chatterjee and Kartar Singh Campbellpuri set up by Swatantra Party on July 31, after a tour of Punjab found the measures taken by Kairon government as "excessive, indiscriminate and harsh" with a view to strike terror in the people.[68] The Hindu communalists of various hues - Congressite Arya Samajists, office holders of Sanatan Dharam Pratinidhi Sabha and a host of others including Jagat Narain - termed the demand for Punjabi Suba as a step towards independent Sikh state and offered their support to the government. So also was the case with a number of Sikh leaders, who sought to curry favour with the government.[69] Congressite Sikhs including Kairon, Giani Kartar Singh and a host of others condemned the movement "aiming at Sikh state in the veil of Punjabi Suba."

Nehru's 1960 Independence Day broadcast terming the agitation as a stage *tamasha*, only reflected his closed mind.

The Punjab Governor's ordinance on October 2, declaring Punjabi as the official language at district level on the basis of Regional Formula was belated recognition of dawn of wisdom in the government. However, lathi charge and police firing at Bhatinda on October 9, after authorities failure to contrive apologies from Akali prisoners, worsened the atmosphere.

Ashok Mehta, Chairman, PSP on October 30, warned the Government of India of an emergent explosive situation. The Enquiry Committee set up by PSP after visiting various parts of Punjab spoke of the reign of terror and suppression of civil liberties.[71]

Pressure was mounting up in the Punjab and various political elements were coming around to saner position. To begin with, Sant Fateh Singh laid emphasis on linguistic aspect of Punjabi Suba demand shorn of any verbiage about the position of the Sikhs in the unit. Ranbir of Urdu daily *Milap* on August 21, 1960, exhorted Punjabi-renegade Hindus to own up their mother tongue and not be 'a traitor' to their mother. Prem Bhatia, Editor, *Times of India*, shortly afterwards tendered similar advice. And above all, RSS leader, M. S. Golwalkar, in early November 1960, when on a visit to the Punjab, urged Punjabi Hindus to "accept Punjabi as their mother tongue" with all its consequences.[72]

With PSP, Swatantra and Communists, apart from some Hindi zealots including the RSS Chief harping on the same collegiate situation, here was an opportunity for Nehru to implement his December 1959 thesis that Punjab was predominantly a Punjabi speaking state with some pockets of Hindi speaking people. But because of inbuilt Sikh phobia and his sense of historical mission to confront and contain Sikhism, he failed to rise to the occasion. Rather on November 17, I960, at the Agricultural University at Rudrapur, when some Sikhs interrupted his speech shouting Punjabi Suba *Zindabad*(long live), Nehru lost his equilibrium and betrayed his inner self when he burst forth, "You fools, your Punjabi Suba has been left in Pakistan" and taunted them "Go to your Punjabi Suba. Why are you here?"[73]

Nehru's intemperate words, reflective of his inherent intolerance of the Sikhs, caused dismay in the Sikh community. Sant Fateh Singh on October 29, wrote to Nehru, "Your statement has brought the things to a level that I am left with no alternative but to resort to fast unto death to prick your conscience." Not getting a response, Fateh Singh in another letter to Nehru fixed

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December 18, 1960, as the beginning of his fast. This made Jaya Prakash Narayan to reason with an obdurate Nehru in vain.[74]

Fateh Singh while beginning his fast on December 18,1960, exhorted those present, despite Nehru, to remain loyal to the country." Every particle of the country is ours, and its loss is our loss." Nehru two days later repeated his December 1959 statement that "Punjabi is the main language of Punjab" and Fateh Singh gave indication of grasping Nehru's conciliatory hand. But there was guile in Nehru's talk to declare entire Punjab a unilingual state with Punjabi as state language. Kairon's followers, a battery of Sikh MLAs, lined up to condemn the fast as anti-democratic and against the tenets of the Sikh faith. Baldev Singh's attack on Kairon for failure to implement the Regional Formulae, apolitical settlement, which had brought Punjab to an abyss, was supported by Prabodh Chandra, a prominent Congress MLA.

Before Nehru's deceptive offer to declare the whole of Punjab as a unilingual state could be made the basis of future talks, Kairon released Tara Singh on January 4, 1961. Already under his instructions, Superintendent of Dharamsala Jail had worked upon Tara Singh's gullibility that Sant Fateh Singh had stolen a march over him in popular estimation and threatened his leadership.

Sant Fateh Singh refused to accept Nehru's telegram from Bhavnagar offering negotiations on unilingual Punjabi speaking state as fulfillment of his pledge; "Unless the principle was accepted, I cannot go back on my words."

Fateh Singh's adamant statement made Tara Singh to fly to Bhavnagar for personal talks with Nehru on January 7, 1961. Nehru and Tara Singh had sharp exchanges. Nehru said that he would not permit the Sikhs to continue this agitation any longer, or mount another one hereafter. He ridiculed at the overall Sikh percentage in India, and said imperiously he had had enough of them. And, if they persist, he would teach them a lesson that they would remember for generations, Nehru had both Shankaracharya's crushing of Buddhists and the extermination of Melians in Ancient Greece following the Peloponnesian War around 410 B.C. in his mind. Pertinently, in the negotiations preceding the War, the stand of Melo's, a small power, in the words of Greek historian Thucydides was "rich in principle and high in moral content." The Greeks, then a great power, conscious of their military might made their intentions clear by saying, "You know as well as we do, that right, as the world goes, is only in question between equals in power. While strong do what they can, the weak suffer what they must." In the ensuing war, each and every male Melian to the child of one day was killed and there women folk taken over by the Greeks. Nehru was not unconscious of the issues at stake, and in his usual Brahminical arrogance was speaking from the position of strength.

Tara Singh sought to disabuse Nehru of his reading of the Sikh history. He said he himself came from Hindu background, but knew the Sikhs very well. Nehru did not. If it came to that, the Sikhs would know how to defend themselves. The responsibility for disintegration of India would be that of Nehru, and history won't forgive him. Tara Singh continued that if they sit together for 15 minutes, they can solve the problem amicably. Thereafter, that sort of opportunity may not present itself. Tara Singh's attempt to humour Nehru's megalomania by referring to his international standing for peace and amicable solution of problems drew no response. He left disappointed.[75]

Meanwhile, at the instance of intermediaries, Seth Ram Nath and Harcharan Singh, Nehru decided to resort to another strategem. That made him to reiterate the following day that, "It is not

out of any discrimination against Punjab, or distrust of the Sikhs that the process of forming a linguistic state was not possible after applying it elsewhere," and that "Punjab state is broadly speaking a Punjabi *Suba* with Punjabi as dominant language. It is true that some persons of the Punjab speak Hindi, but essentially Punjabi is the dominant language and should be encouraged in every way."

There was nothing new in Nehru's empty statement but Tara Singh then in Delhi sent a telegram to Fateh Singh to break his fast as, "It fulfills requirements of vow". Fateh Singh's breaking his fast on January 9, 1961, came as an anti-climax. Tara Singh soon after, at a Press Conference at his house in Amritsar, stated, "The battle for attainment of Punjabi Suba would continue. The suspension of the struggle is only a truce or a ceasefire to create a good atmosphere for talks."[76]

To the Sikh masses, it indicated that the struggle for Punjabi *Suba* was lost. Tara Singh was hooted at Manji Sahib on January 11, and again the following day. The Sikh gathering at Mukatsar for Maghi Mela refused to listen to him. His influence was on the wane.

Nehru held three rounds of talks with Fateh Singh on February 8, March 1, and May 8, 1961, when he advanced specious arguments for non-formation of Punjabi *Suba*. He, inter alia, argued,

1st meeting, February 8

1. Both parts of Punjab would have religious minorities, and especially there would be "a large section of Hindus as a religious minority in the Punjabi-speaking state who would not be willing to co-operate; what safeguards could be given to that minority? (Sant Fateh Singh pointed out that Sikhs would be 52 percent in Punjabi *Suba* and why should be Hindus afraid of living in Punjabi *Suba*, and what would be the position of a minority, only one or two percent (like Sikhs) in a preponderant Hindu majority? And why should Nehru think in terms of communal percentages.)
2. In case of formation of Punjabi Suba there would be psychological and sentimental barriers against the Sikhs in other parts of India, (Fateh Singh frankly told Nehru that it was unbecoming of him to talk in religious and communal terms. And that, as Prime Minister, it was his duty to stop such sentiments and not arouse them.)
3. Different countries were coming together towards World State idea, and Punjabi Suba was incompatible with that. (Fateh Singh said that when the idea took a practical shape, they would not be lagging behind.)

2nd meeting, March 1

4. Again, Hindus in Punjabi Suba would become a minority, thereby aggravating minority problem. (Fateh Singh told him that they should not talk in terms of communal minorities, but linguistic minorities. And then Hindus would be about equal in Punjabi Suba, almost equal.)
   (*Hereafter it is proposed to give only the problems posed by Nehru*)
5. The government was under heavy burden - border dispute with China, threat from Pakistan, mob violence in Karachi (Pakistan), communal riots in Jabalpur and Sagar in Madhya Pradesh. Therefore, Punjabi Suba cannot be formed.
6. He could not hand over power to an irresponsible person such as Master Tara Singh. How could he hand over power to enemies (Nehru actually regarded all the Sikhs enemies except those serving him who in his views were mercenaries)

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3rd meeting, May 12

7. When people were going to the moon, why should hardworking people of Punjab ask for Punjabi *Suba*?
8. By conceding Punjabi Suba, Five Year Plan would be obstructed.
9. Pakistan and China had encroached on our land, therefore no Punjabi Suba.
10. Urban Hindus in Punjab were annoyed because they did not have so much influence in public life as before. More and more people from rural areas were coming forward and participating in public life causing annoyance to Hindus.

Sant Fateh Singh said, "Panditji you are considering as if some Sikh state was being carved out. I may make it clear that Punjabi-speaking state would be like other states of Bharat." Finally, Sant Fateh Singh pointed out to his reputation of resolving international disputes and why could he not settle this petty dispute in our own country. Nehru kept quiet for a minute and said that it was his final opinion that there would be no Punjabi *Suba* during his regime.[77]

Shortly afterwards Nehru recorded a note "For Eyes Only"[77a] of his successors that no concession whatsoever in future should he made to the Sikhs. Mention may be made of three mindless accusations levelled against the Akalis at various times during the 1960-61 agitation. One, as per arrangements between the Pakistan President General Ayub and Master Tara Singh, Pakistan would train 10,000 Sikhs in guerrilla warfare; two, Kairon accused Tara Singh of starting Punjabi Suba agitation with the support and encouragement of Pakistan; and three, Tara Singh was accused of instructing Bir Khalsa Dal, Youth Wing, to learn the technique of using explosives to attack opponents. These were indicative of the working of Nehru's mind and provided and outline to contain the Sikhs in future to subject then to state terrorism. This outline came handy to his daughter, Indira, two decades later.

Going through the brochure on these talks some one aptly summed up his attitude towards Nehru in a monosyllable in Punjabi, *kameena* - mean in English language does not adequately convey the Punjabi nuances of the word. Nehru, in short, from these talks comes out a rabid communalist, *pucca* Hindu, rabidly anti-Sikh, and quite out of mind.[78] By the time, he, from being an agnostic, in the words of Gulzari Lal Nanda, "had become religious". And, of whimsical type with his participating in mumbo-jumbo *Japs*, recitation of jantra-mantra-tantra fetishes by astrologers, inter alia, to prolong his life.[79] This went on till his very last.

Meanwhile, a section of Punjabi Hindus, because of tense atmosphere, disowned Punjabi in the 1961 Census. Nehru disapproved of that but unlike 1951 did not ask for non-tabulation of language figures in Punjab. These had been falsified on a large scale. In addition there was an attempt at inflation of Hindu population in the Punjabi region.

Sant Fateh Singh indeed was a disappointed man. He again talked of the need for a supreme sacrifice to achieve the objective.

The General Body of the Akali Dal on May 28, 1961, with Dr. Saifuddin Kitchlu, Kali Charan Sharma, Pandit Sunder Lal, Harcharan Singh, Seth Ram Nath, Udham Singh Nagoke of Swatantra Party and Harbhajan Singh of PSP as special invitees, authorised Master Tara Singh to go on fast unto death. Tara Singh fixed August 15, for its commencement. The resolution adopted, inter alia, stated,

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> Ever since the Congress leaders came to supreme power in the country, they have dealt with and treated the Sikhs as if they were alien people under the heels of conquering race, and assumed colonial power invested with the mission of subjugating and absorbing others; and it is from this basic attitude that the gross discrimination against and sustained suppression of the Sikh individuals and masses has proceeded in post-partition India.[80]

The statement of Harcharan Singh Hudiara that after Tara Singh and Fateh Singh "the new Akali leaders might give a call for an independent Punjabi state instead of Punjabi Suba" was significant.

There was counter mobilisation by communal Hindus and Congressite Sikhs. Tara Singh's offer to accept a plebiscite on the issue in the Punjabi region, which he said would be discriminatory against the Sikhs, evoked no response. Nehru's letter to Tara Singh of August 10, made no new offer. Tara Singh as such began his fast on August 15, 1961.

Fateh Singh drew blank in his talks with Nehru on August 24-25. Even the suggestion to make the Regional Councils into some kind of sub-legislatures evoked no response. Nehru made no counter proposals. He stated in Parliament on August 28, 1961, that, "The demand for a Punjabi *Suba* can only be considered as a communal demand even though it is given a linguistic basis." He made an offer to go in for a high level enquiry into charges of discrimination against the Sikhs.

In a special debate on August 29, in Lok Sabha, Nehru justified opposition to Punjabi *Suba* in the name of 45 percent or so of Hindus who objected. He was far wrong. The actual number of Punjabi-renegade miscreants was 5 to 6 percent. The following day in Rajya Sabha he was more forthright that conceding Punjabi Suba would effect the whole future of the Punjab and India. These stunned the Sikhs. The Akali Dal deplored Nehru's "positive incitement against this small minority" and for "sacrificing the highest principles of secularism."[81] Nehru admitted to Norman Cousins of inconsistency in his approach.

C. Rajagopalchari stated "that the Sikhs will happen to be in majority if Punjabi language is recognised in certain areas and given identical treatment should not be reason to deny equal treatment." Jaya Prakash Narayan on September 1, met Tara Singh who was willing to accept arbitration by eminent personalities like Rajaji, Ajoy Ghosh, Ashok Mehta or J. P. Narayan.

Maharaja Yadavendra Singh of Patiala too undertook to mediate and induce a rational approach but to no effect. The Akali assertion for formation of Punjabi *Suba* on purely linguistic principles and to even accept Hindu majority did not find favour with Nehru despite his earlier statements, as that would pave the way for division of U.P., and the unity of Jats.

Nehru's visit to Belgrade and his last success in foreign policy in giving orientation to Non-Aligned Movement in early September 1961 did not induce him to adopt a rational approach in Punjab. Kairon made his own contribution to vitiate the atmosphere and win confidence of Hindu chauvinists. It was obvious that Tara Singh's death at that stage would have led to a mass uprising and an uncontrollable situation.

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Nehru was willing to face civil war and exterminate the Sikhs a la Shankaracharya's extermination of Buddhists. The Akalis had the option to go ahead for Punjabi Suba with the Sikh community annihilated.

Nehru, by the end of September 1961, was heading towards confrontation with the Portuguese on Goa, and things were hotting up. He thought it desirable to have Tara Singh's fast out of the way. On September 29, he appealed to Tara Singh to give up the fast. The following day, Hardit Singh Malik accompanied by Maharaja of Patiala met Nehru. There was talk of a compromise around the proposed High Power Commission.

Malik disclosed after Nehru's death that he was asked by Nehru to convey to Tara Singh that the principle of linguistic redistribution of provinces will be applied to Punjab as well.[82] Atmosphere had been vitiated and things were carried in a hush-hush manner. Tara Singh was assured of favourable terms of reference and of personnel of the High Powered Commission. He broke his fast on October 1, 1961. The Akali Dal Working Committee approved of the compromise. By that time 57,129 Akali workers had courted arrest.

Punjabi-renegade Hindus now activated themselves to sabotage the terms of settlement and warned on October 6, that "the Hindus of Punjab would not accept the settlement." Kairon sought to vitiate the atmosphere by continuous restrictions on civil liberties and slowing down the process of release of Akali prisoners, or taking them again into custody after release. Disturbed at the turn of events, Hardit Singh Malik saw the Union Home Minister, Lal Bahadur Shastri, on October 24, 1961, but got no response.

Tara Singh accompanied by Malik saw Nehru on October 30. The government issued notification the following day constituting the High Powered Commission consisting of S.R. Das, Retired Chief Justice of India and father-in-law of Law Minister P.C. Sen as Chairman, and C.P. Ramaswami Ayar and M.C. Chagla as members, to go into the charges of discrimination against the Sikhs.

It immediately invited Akali protest. Tara Singh asserted that mediators had informed him that Commission would consist of Patanjali Shastri former Chief Justice of India, Ramaswami Mudaliar and another nominee of the government. The exchanges between Akali Dal and Nehru were unfruitful.[83] The mediators, at the time, did not contradict either side at that crucial stage, though Malik later asserted that Nehru had actually backed out of his words. Nehru was actuated by Chanakaya whose great work he used to keep by his badside. The Akalis legitimately doubted the integrity of the Commission and decided to boycott it, unless both the terms of reference and personnel were changed. The Sikh organisations followed suit.

Kartar Singh Chawla, an Advocate of Punjab High Court appeared in his personal capacity and wanted to be granted amnesty for referring to some 'secret circular' and other 'government documents' to establish discrimination. Since the Commission was not interested in this line of enquiry, it declined.

Pratap Singh Kairon brought in Dr. Gopal Singh Dardi who appeared before the Commission on behalf of Nationalist Sikhs, a nebulous entity. He contended that there was no discrimination but rather the Sikhs were accorded preferential treatment. As an afterthought, he later contended that he had brought instances of discrimination against the Sikhs in Terai region of

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U.P., absence of heavy industry in Punjab, etc. to the notice of the Commission.[84] The Commission was a big *tamasha* and its report a foregone conclusion. The only beneficiary was Dr. Gopal Singh who was rewarded with nomination to Rajya Sabha, upper house of Parliament.[85]

Tara Singh's breaking the fast without achieving anything created turmoil in the rank and file. It helped to initiate the process of disintegration of the Akali Dal. Lachhaman Singh Gill, an ambitious but unscrupulous government contractor, and Jiwan Singh Umaranangal on November 15, 1961, asked Tara Singh to resign from Presidentship of Akali Dal. Fateh Singh sided with Gill and others in the ensuing confrontation. Eventually the case whether Tara Singh and Fateh Singh had broken the vow went to *Panj Piaras*, (five beloved ones) - in the present case five head priests of Akal Takht/Golden Temple to adjudicate. Their verdict on November 29, 1961, held both of them guilty of breaking the vow, with Fateh Singh being treated leniently. This contributed to the parting of the ways between Tara Singh and Fateh Singh.

The general elections of January-February 1962 did not help to clear the matter.[86] Sant Fateh Singh, the rising star in the Sikh politics, personally concentrated on defeating Kairon. Chaudhary Devi Lal from Haryana too went to Kairon's constituency and canvassed for his opponent Mohan Singh Tur, the Akali candidate. Tur won the seat, but the polling officer[87] declared Kairon elected by 34 votes. The Chief Election Commissioner, Sundram, after an on-the-spot study reportedly told Nehru of the grave abuse of electoral processes. Nehru, however, justified them saying "I want Pratap Singh Kairon to be the Chief Minister of the Punjab."[88]

Kairon's position was now weakened, but that all the more made him obdurate. Firstly, he began talking through his turban, of Punjab's merger not only with Himachal Pradesh, but also Rajasthan, part or whole of Jammu and Kashmir to make for a strong border state. Secondly, he started harping on Jat culture and character in the process seeking to encourage revolt in Akali Dal against leadership of Master Tara Singh, a Khatri. Kairon now adopted a patronising attitude towards Sant Fateh Singh, especially the Akali dissidents who were Jats.

The dissidents even otherwise were heading towards a showdown. Tara Singh's position had been considerably weakened and he committed some tactical mistakes in expelling Gill and Umaranangal which precipitated the split of Akali Dal in July 1962. Sant Fateh Singh who emerged as leader of the breakaway faction reiterated the demand for Punjabi *suba* on a purely linguistic basis.[89] The Hindu press, in glee at the division in Akali ranks, started building up Sant Fateh Singh. This encouraged Fateh Singh to claim at a Conference in Sarhali, Kairon's hometown, in August 1962, that Punjabi Suba of his concept had the support of Hindus and Harijans as well.

The struggle between the two groups deepened. The adoption of no-confidence motion in Kirpal Singh Chaksherawala, President of the SGPC, a Tara Singh nominee, on October 2, by 76 votes to 72, showed growing ascendancy of Fateh Singh. This, however, gave a wrong signal to Punjabi-renegade Hindus who shortly afterwards sought repudiation of the Regional Formulae.

By now, there was material change in the national scene. A temporarily insane Nehru provoked the Chinese by his statement at Madras that he had asked the Indian armed forces to throw the Chinese troops out of certain border posts.

The Chinese struck in a major way scattering the Indian forces. The Sikh soldiers who fought the Chinese valiantly were special target of Chinese atrocities. According to the testimony of

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B.N. Malik, Director, Intelligence Bureau of the Government of India, "The Chinese perpetrated untold cruelties on the brave wounded Sikhs. Many of them were tied and then dragged and their brains were battered."[90] The Chief Ministers of Rajasthan and U.P. moved at the bravery of the Sikhs, announced concessions for Punjabi soldiers. The Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh announced introduction of Punjabi in Gurmukhi script in 10th and 11th classes.[91] But these had no impact on Punjabi-renegade Hindus and their helmsman Jawaharlal Nehru, who even in his wretched state continued to regard the Sikhs only as mercenaries.[92]

The Indian setback caused national indignation and demoralisation. People including Sikhs rose to support a humiliated Nehru. The opposition in Parliament for the first time sponsored a motion of no confidence in Nehru government. The irrepressible Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia in a telling statement in Parliament stated, "Are you looking for a traitor?" Pointing to Nehru, he continued, "Here is he. His name is Jawaharlal Nehru". Nehru could not strike back in self defence, for he had none. The same evening he had a paralytic stroke which crippled his body: he had already been out of his mind since 1959. But he did not follow the democratic traditions and resign. To perpetuate his dynasty, he continued to stick to office, and wanted Indira Gandhi to succeed him.[93]

Meanwhile, the Working Committee of Sant Akali Dal in December 1962 had decided not to press the demand for Punjabi *Suba* because of the national emergency. Subsequently, on February 7, 1963, Sant Fateh Singh presented Prime Minister Nehru a cheque for Rs. 50,000 on behalf of the SGPC as its contribution to the National Defence Council. Similar were the feelings of Tara Singh group of Akali Dal. But Kairon and Hindu communalists continued their assault on the Sikh identity. Jan Sangh even went to the extent of calling for a unitary form of government - a certain prescription for disintegration of India - to spite the Sikhs.

Kairon's raising of auxiliary force namely Home Guards and going in for an air rifle factory with American collaboration caused doubts in members of Congress High Command about his intentions in post-Nehru era. A group of Congressmen submitted memorandum about his malfeasance and that of his family members. A deputation of joint opposition leaders led by Master Tara Singh, and including Devi Lal, Abdul Ghani Dar, Jagat Narain and others, submitted a memorandum to President, Radhakrishnan, enlisting 32 charges of corruption, nepotism and favoritism against Kairon. Nehru was forced to institute a one-man enquiry commission, consisting of S.R. Das, though he publicly justified the need for continuation of Kairon[94] - a "slave overseer. . . more heartless than any alien beast." The dissident Congress members of Legislative Assembly protested to Nehru for acquitting Kairon before enquiry and for confining it only to opposition charges and ignoring the charge sheet submitted by them.

Dispirited, Nehru passed melancholy day till he passed into history on May 27, 1964. It was whispered in a hush hush manner in the corridors of South Block that he had died of syphilis.

With Nehru's death, Kairon's exit was only a matter of time. An era passed away in the history of Punjab and of the Sikhs.

Nehru era was marked by a rapacious policy of negativism towards the Sikhs. Whatever the merits of the man, his policies and outlook, his attitude and mien toward the Sikhs were reflective of his deep seated hostility. Significantly, Sardar Patel in one of his observations had regarded Nehru's

attitude towards Kashmir and towards the Sikhs as that of "emotional insanity". Because of Nehru, India failed to emerge as a nation in emotional and cultural sense.

We cannot do better than quote two contemporary Sikh assessments, one in 1952 at the start of the unrestrained Nehru era, and the other as part of homage to Nehru on his death. Precisely, Hukam Singh wrote in the *Spokesman* Weekly of January 16, 1952:

> Pandit Nehru is, to say the least, the spearhead of militant Hindu chauvinism who glibly talks about nationalism, a tyrant who eulogises democracy and a Goebblian liar - in short, a political cheat, deceiver and double dealer in the service of Indian reaction.

Paying tributes to Jawaharlal Nehru, on his death, in the Punjab Assembly on September 14, 1964, Gurnam Singh, a former Judge of Punjab High Court and leader of the Opposition, stated that while he associated the Sikh community with the nation's grief at the passing "of our great Prime Minister", he wished "to put on record his regret" that, A true understanding of the Sikhs and statesman-like comprehension of their genuine problems evaded our late Prime Minister." He asserted that while no amount of complacency could "submerge them for a long time", it was a misfortune that "a true realisation of the political position of the Sikhs remained unappreciated".[95]

In the end, to quote Jawaharlal Nehru, many a Congressmen were worst communalists. So far as the Sikhs are concerned, he was the chief among them. When an issue involving the Sikh rights, even on the basis of justice and equity came up, Jawaharlal lost his cool detached intellect and emitted uncontrolled, instinctive, and emotional outburst fuelled by wild passions. He played the Hindu communal card repeatedly and behaved like a rabid Hindu. His Gangu-Brahmin heritage weighed too much upon him. When he spoke of national integration, in Punjab he always meant the integration of Sikhism within the framework of Hinduism. He patronised the schismatic Sikh sects to weaken the main body of the Khalsa. He laid down broad outlines to crush the Sikhs in case they raise their heads *a la* 1960-61, or challenge the Congress brand of Hindu-secularism. It were these aspects of his work that were carried forward by the scions of his family when in power. He left behind a deep legacy of anti-Sikhism, and a blueprint for their annihilation. Later, these came quite handy to his daughter, Indira.

Footnotes:

1. Lester B. Pearson, The *International Years*, (London, 1974), Vol. 2 p. 119.
2. Michael Brecher, *Nehru*, *A Political Biography*. (London, 1959), pp. 435-36.
3. *Modern Review* (Calcutta), November 1937.
4. Sarvepalli Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru*, *A Biography*, (Delhi. 1986), Vol. II. pp. 303-04.
5. It led to communal clashes in Jalandhar District and at least one person died. The union Home Minister conceded falsification of language returns and ordered deletion of tabulation for Punjabi and Hindi speakers.
6. Jawaharlal Nehru, *Letters to Chief Ministers*, (*G*. Parthasarthy, Gen. Ed), (Delhi, 1986), letters dated June 2, and August 19, 1951, Vol. 2, p. 413, 481.
7. M. J. Akbar, *Nehru*, *The Making of India*, (London, 1988), p. 472.
8. It was logical that later under his successors, such money generated outside India through commissions and kickbacks out of government deals should be kept out of India and deposited in Swiss Banks.

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9. Ajit Singh Sarhadi, *Punjabi Suba*, *The Story of Struggles* (Delhi, 1970), p. 220.
10. Quoted in Ibid, p. 218.
11. Ibid, p. 218.
12. Brecher, n. 2, p. 442.
13. Satya Mehta Rai, *Punjab Since Partition*, (Delhi 1986 edn), p. 261.
14. Nehru, n. 6, Vol. 3, pp. 198, 230, 242 and ad passim.
15. Sarhadi, n. 9, p. 225. This was the background of the charges that Sikhs in civil and military services were being discriminated against, and also being subjected to ridicule and calumny.
16. Nehru could have made the announcement a few days earlier to save Potti Sriramulu's life. But he awaited to draw blood.
17. Nehru, n. 6, Vol. 3, p. 246 fn.
18. This had been the second lime that the Congress government had interfered in the orderly holding of Nankana Sahib martyrs day celebrations - the earlier one being in February 1949 in Delhi when Nehru had instigated Patel to prevent the holding of *Diwan*.
19. For complaint made to Baba Kharak Singh, sec 101 n. chapter 6. The issue also came up at All Parties Sikh Conference in Amritsar in early 1953.
20. See p. 76 ante.
21. Nehru's letter to Chief Ministers, December 31. 1953, n. 6, Vol. 3, p. 475.
22. He had the precedent of Gandhi addressing Sikh congregations in Gurdwaras. That only showed that Gandhi-Nehru did not mind using the Gurdwaras for political purposes but decried the use when made by others.
23. Breacher. n. 2, p. 471.
24. For nuances of various elements, see Rai, n. 13, pp. 277-91, besides the paragraph which follows.
25. See, p 180, ante.
26. Partap Singh, *Sardar Hukam Singh*, *Biography*, (Delhi, 1989). p. 86. Hukam Singh in the *Spokesman* Weekly, January 7 & 14, 1974.
27. Earlier an attempt had been made at Ludhiana on December 31, 1954, at the time of Guru Gobind Singh's birthday celebrations to obstruct the route of the religious procession by setting local Congressites, Dr. Kali Charan and his followers, to attack it. The magisterial enquiry ordered by the Punjab government laid blame on Dr. Kali Charan for the fracas.
28. The *Times of India*, May 10, 1955.
29. For text of statement of May 9, Sarhadi, n. 8, p. 241.
30. Ibid, pp. 243-47; Rai, n. 13, p. 291; Partap Singh, n. 26. p. 89.
31. Nehru, n. 6, Vol 2, p. 261.
32. For text see Sarhadi, n. 9, 253-58.
33. Emphasis added. Brecher, n. 2, pp. 486-87; For Principal Teja Singh's account in the *Spokesman* weekly of February 11, 1956, see Sarhadi, n. 8, p. 259. According to Teja Singh there was a gathering of 5 million Sikhs at Amritsar of whom half a million participated in the procession.
34. For text, see, Sarhadi, n. 9, pp. 260-61.
35. Jawaharlal Nehru, *Discovery of India* [1956] (Delhi 1981 edn), p. 494.
36. Adolf Hitler in Mein Kemptf, quoted in Ibid.
37. Partap Singh, n. 26, pp. 94-97.
38. Ibid; also Hukam Singh in the *Spokesman* Weekly, January 15, 1973. By the time Maulana Azad had deposited 30 pages of his memoirs, *India Wins Freedom*, with National Archives of India and the National Library of Calcutta to be published 30 years after his death, as he lacked the courage to call a spade a spade during his own life time, or the life time of the persons he had indicted.

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39. Sarhadi, n. 9, p. 263.
40. Ibid, pp. 265-66.
41. Master Tara Singh, *Jiwan Sangharsh te Udesh* (Gurbakhsh Singh, Ed) (Amritsar, 1972), pp. 278-80.
42. He was re-elected in 1967 and elected as Speaker in 1972. These accusations weighed heavily on Hukam Sikh who denied them in several articles in the *Spokesman* Weekly of June-July 1973, and also from his death bed in May 1983. Cf. Partap Singh, n. 26, p. 129.
43. Rai, n. 13. p. 297.
44. Ibid.
45. Ibid, p. 299.
46. Diwan Alakh Dhari in the *Organiser*, 28 November, 1956, quoted in Ibid, p. 301.
47. Ibid. p. 302.
48. Ibid. p. 272.
49. Ibid. pp. 278-80.
50. In a lengthy resolution it recalled in capsule form the history of Akali Dal's collaboration with Congress in freedom struggle down to the present understanding- Punjabi being recognised as a regional language, equal treatment of Hindu and Sikh Scheduled Castes all over India, non-interference in internal administration of Gurdwaras, redressal of cases of glaring injustice to Sikhs in public services. Ibid. pp. 281-84.
51. Ibid. p. 286.
52. Hukam Singh in *the Spokesman* Weekly, October 8, 1973.
53. Sarhadi, n. 9, pp. 300-01.
54. Ibid.
55. Gurmit Singh, *History of the Sikh Struggles*, (Delhi, 1989), p. 124.
56. Sarhadi. n. 9, p. 306.
57. Ibid, p. 308.
58. To the knowledge of the author, Giani Kartar Singh spoke to Tara Singh on these lines.
59. Sarhadi, n. 9, p. 315.
60. Nehru had reservations about arbitration as a means of solution of problems. Though Article 51 of the Indian Constitution commended arbitration as a means of solution of problems, Nehru turned down umpteen Pakistani proposals to go in for arbitration for solution of problems between the two countries.
61. Gopal n. 4, Vol. II, p. 262.
62. This made Darbara Singh, President Punjab Congress, to say that Akalis were inviting support from Pakistan! Nehru's failure to discipline much less fire him, spoke Volumes. Darbara Singh was, to borrow a Chinese phrase, the running dog of Hindu chauvinism.
63. Sarhadi, n. 9, pp. 322-25.
64. Ibid.
65. Ibid.
66. Gurmit Singh, n. 55, p. 127.
67. The official sources put number of deaths at one with 100 injured from the mob and 75 from the police force. Ibid, p. 128; Sarhadi, n. 9, p. 330.
68. Sarhadi, n.9, p. 329.
69. Ibid, p. 331.
70. Tara Singh, n. 41, p. 301.
71. Gurmit Singh, n. 55, pp. 131-32.
72. *Times of India*. November 4. 1960; *Hindustan Times* and *Times of India* of November 10, 1960.
73. Gurmit Singh. n. 55, p. 133.

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74. Sarhadi, n. 9, pp. 335-36.
75. Tara Singh's talks with Dr. Kuldip Singh, FRCS shortly before his death. See fn. 76(a) Chapter 6, ante.
76. Sarhadi, n. 9, p. 343-345.
77. For minutes of Nehru-Patch Singh talks, see Gurmit Singh. n. 55, pp. 366-99.
77a. "For Eyes Only" in Government is a classification higher than Top Secret it is design to be shown to a specific person, in this case, only to successor(s) on assumption of Office.
78. People who met Nehru after 1958 found him to be a phantom of his earlier self.

According to Lord Louis Mount batten if Nehru had died in 1958 he would have been acclaimed as one of great statesmen of century. From 1959, he deteriorated very fast.

This was not the first time that he used light hearted arguments in serious talks. Earlier in April 1960, he talked in similar vein to Chinese Prime Minister. Chou En-lai, on a visit to New Delhi, when the latter had put forth certain cogent proposals for solution of border dispute. Chou felt slighted at Nehru's demeanour. Not only that, in diffidence the Indian side failed to record Chou's proposals, spelling out concessions they were willing to make, in the minutes of the meeting. When wisdom much later dawned upon the Indians, and they wanted to refer to Chou En-lai's proposals, the Chinese justifiably pointed out that there was nothing on record to show what the Indians were saying.

Nehru's meeting with President Kennedy in November 1961 by all accounts was a disaster. Nehru was otherwise a bundle of contradictions. Krishna Menon once challenged someone to quote Nehru on something, he offered to quote Nehru on the samething to the contrary. Who else than Krishna Menon, who knew Nehru inside out, could say that!

79. Kuldip Nayar, *India After Nehru.* (Delhi, 1975), p. 2.
80. Text in Sarhadi. n. 9. pp. 350-52.
81. Ibid, pp. 357-58.
82. Letter to *Hindustan Times* June 26, 1965, in Gurmit Singh, n. 55, p. 147.
83. Sarhadi, n. 9, pp. 369-70.
84. Gurmit Singh, n. 55, p. 148.
85. Later, he got two Ambassadorial appointments, was a Member of the Minority Commission, Lt. Governor and then Governor. In between when / he was out of job, he started fulminating till his mouth was shut again. His (*History of the Sikh People* (Delhi, 1988) shows traces of grappling with the truth, e.g. when he wrote about Gandhi's double standards, but did not (develop the theme as he continued to run after offices till the very last.
86. Akalis won 19 seats in Punjab Assembly and 3 in Parliament.
87. A Block Development Officer, was the Returning Officer. He was amply rewarded by Kairon with nomination to Indian Administration Services (IAS).
88. Sarhadi, n. 9, p. 377.
89. The spilt was formalised at parallel meetings of two Akali Dais at different venues on August 18, 1962. Harbans Singh, *The Heritage of the Sikhs*, (Delhi, 1983), p. 368.
90. B.N. Malik, *The Chinese Betrayal*, p. 413, quoted in Gurmit Singh n. 55, p. 152.
91. Ibid.
92. For instance, Dr. Sushila Nayar, then Union Health Minister, and who had once put her fingers on the pulse of M.K. Gandhi, at a public meeting in Delhi on November 11, 1963, ridiculed the Sikhs and their Gurus by calling them "just unshaven Hindus distinguished by their unshingled, unshorn appearance, blindly imitating their ancestors who lacked the leisure and facilities for proper shave." Earlier, on June 25, 1963, Acharya Vinobha Bhave, the officially patronised saint and close associate of M.K. Gandhi, at Bhowanipur (Calcutta) had ridiculed the practice of present day Sikhs wearing the *Kirpan* (sword) which like Gandhi earlier, he called

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as an outmoded weapon. He later apologised for hurting the susceptibilities of the Sikhs. Again, there was an incident in early 1964 of Bihar government officials shaving off the moustache and the beard of a Sikh driver who did not let them take over his vehicle. After a judicial enquiry was instituted, senior officials of the Bihar Government went to Patna Sahib Gurdwara and publicly apologised. Finally, five days before Nehru's death. May 22, 1964, Himachal police fired at the Sikh historical shrine of Paonta Sahib, killing many Nihang Sikhs. The police desecrated the historic shrine. The inmates of the Gurdwara were subjected to inhuman torture. The shrine was closed and no one was permitted to enter it for two days. See, Gurmit Singh, n. 55, pp. 154-55.

93. Nehru was upset when he found that Shastri wanted to succeed him. He in his final days wanted to strike a deal with Morarji Desai to be number two and let Indira succeed him. Desai declined. Shastri too said that Nehru always had his daughter in mind as successor. Kuldip Nayar, n. 79, pp. 6-8.
94. Sarhadi, n. 9, p. 395.
95. *The Statesman*, September 15, 1964.

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8
Achievement and Frustration
(1964 - 1975)

The succession as Prime Minister of Lal Bahadur Shastri, the tiny little man, who rose several times in height by the time of his death in another 18 months, was not expected to herald any change in the Government of India's attitude and policies towards the Sikhs. Shastri was well aware of Nehru's mistrust of the Sikh objectives. Unlike Nehru, however, he had no family heritage to despise them.

By the time of his induction as Prime Minister, it was certain that the Punjab would be de-Kaironised. The oppressive super structure was to be dismantled. Kairon already had caused misgivings among the members of the Congress High Command about his intentions in post-Nehru era. Besides, in the struggle for succession, he had backed Morarji Desai, the losing candidate, who could have served as the helmsman for the 'slave overseer'.

Justice S. R. Das who was looking into the charges of corruption against Kairon was now emboldened to give a report upholding four of the 32 charges.[1] A week before the report was submitted on June 21, 1964, Kairon resigned. Thereby came to an end, eight years of oppressive Kairon regime which thrived on anti-Sikhism. Kairon had served Nehru well in suppression of the Sikh aspirations. The Sikhs heaved a sigh of relief. This was a byproduct of the change in administration in New Delhi. Kairon was succeeded by Comrade Ram Kishan, a non -entity Arya Samajist, as a result of manoeuverings of Swaran Singh.

The two factions of the Akalis temporarily united in giving expression to the cumulative resentment of the community at the Paonta Sahib sacrilege.[2] But they were soon on the parting of the ways. Sant Fateh Singh, from time to time, met members of the Congress High Command who kept angling at causing a permanent schism between him and Master Tara Singh. His statement of September 9, 1964, assuring the Congress leaders that the Punjab or Punjabi *Suba* would remain part and parcel of India was misplaced,[3] as it were the Congress leaders, especially Nehru, who had threatened expulsion of the Sikhs from other parts of India, if Punjabi Suba was formed. The mediatory efforts of the Panthic Convention at Patiala in November 1964 to bring about reconciliation between the two groups, proved abortive.[4]

Fateh Singh and Tara Singh Akali Dais were now heading towards a clash for Gurdwara elections in January 1965. Fateh Singh was hopeful of victory, but lacked machinery and manpower to organise his party. This provided an ideal opportunity to various cohorts to infiltrate the Sant Akali Dal. This infiltration was both by the leftists and the Congressites. The communists who had been a permanent feature in fighting the Gurdwara elections wound up their Desh Bhagat Board. Though Communists had split in 1964 into Communist Party of India and the Communist Party of India (Marxists) also known as CPM, they kept their limited cooperation in their infiltration strategy. Under the leadership of Gurcharan Singh Tohra, a card holder member of the Communist Party of India, they entered the Sant Akali Dal on a massive scale. Side by side, the Congressites too did not form any 'Khalsa Dal' or 'Sadh Sangat Board', but entered the Sant Akali Dal in strength. The leadership to them was later provided by Balwant Singh who entered Sant Akali Dal in another year or so.[5]

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The January 1965 Gurdwara elections gave a decisive edge to Sant Fateh Singh who won 90 seats against 45 for Master Tara Singh Akali Dal, with few independents. Tara Singh's decision to retire to Salogra in Himachal Pradesh for six months left the field clear for Fateh Singh.

The victory of Sant Fateh Singh, perfected with the help of Communists and Congressites, gave wrong signals to anti-Sikh elements who now started indulging in a series of sacrilegious acts in various part of the Punjab. These included setting to fire copies of *Guru Granth Sahib*, tearing pages from the holy *Granth*, interruption of *Akhand Paths* and the like.[6] The moderate *Sikh Review* of Calcutta in its issue of May 1965 gave expression to the agony of the Sikh mind. It highlighted Arya Samajist Urdu daily *Partap's* sprinkling salt over the wounded Sikh feelings by referring to Guru Nanak inoffensive language. All these were a grim reminder of "the Mughal excesses against the Sikhs in the 18th century."

The Panthic Convention at Patiala on April 29, 1965, was expressive of feelings of deep hurt and disgust of the Sikh community. There was no effort, as yet, to restart the struggle for Punjabi *Suba*.[7]

It was this suffocating atmosphere that made Master Tara Singh's men to give a deep thought to the Sikh problem. They came out with a new slogan and a new ideology to come out of this frustration. Tara Singh was down but not out. He had some followers like Kapur Singh, formerly of I.C.S. and now member of Lok Sabha who was known for his clear thinking and perceptive analysis of the emerging situation. Then, there was Gurnam Singh, former Judge of the Punjab High Court and Leader of Opposition in the Punjab Assembly. He was, however, ambitious.

The holding of the Conference named after the distinguished Sikh soldier, General Hari Singh Nalwa, in May 1965 at Ludhiana was a significant development. The main resolution, which introduced new trails in Sikh polity, was drafted by Kapur Singh. It was moved by Gurnam Singh and seconded by Giani Bhupinder Singh, then President of Master Akali Dal. It recalled that the Sikhs had decided to throw in their lot with the majority community in 1947 "on the explicit understanding of being accorded the constitutional status of co-sharers in the Indian sovereignty alongwith the majority community", and that "This solemn understanding now stands totally repudiated". Further that, "The Sikhs have been systematically reduced to sub-political status in their homeland, and to an insignificant position in their motherland, India." It went on to add that the Sikhs are in a position to establish before *an international tribunal*, uninfluenced by the present Indian rulers, that the law, judicial processes and executive action of the Union of India is consistently and heavily weighted against the Sikhs, and is administered with unbandaged eyes against the Sikh citizens." Finally, it came to the conclusion that, "There is left no alternative for the Sikhs *in the interest of self preservation* than to frame their political demand for securing *a self-determined political status*, *within the republic of the Union* of India."[8]

Two aspects were significant. One, it was for the first time that reference was made to an international tribunal which was expressive of lack of confidence in the Indian judicial processes: these had been persistently subverted by the executive. Two, 'self-determined political status' was to be 'within the Indian Union'. What the organisers had in mind was the Cabinet Mission Plan on the basis of which sovereignty was transferred in 1947.

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The Hindu communal press, not unexpectedly played it up as a demand for a sovereign Sikh state. The resolution received wide publicity and support. Even Chief Khalsa Diwan, a conservative organisation, on August 1, 1965, extended support to the resolution and explained the reasons for that. Precisely, it stated, "Unless the present rulers and the majority community show a change of heart and consider the Sikhs to be co-sharers in the Indian sovereignty (and not second-rate citizens to be humiliated at every step), the Sikhs cannot and will not live a life of peace."[9]

Tara Singh by now was back from 6 months political exile. Accompanied by Khushwant Singh, the prominent journalist as interpreter, he held an international press conference at Delhi on August 2, 1965. He read out a 10 point written statement, a comprehensive document, tracing the treatment meted to the community since 1947. It, for the first time, referred to the ongoing communal riots in India against the Muslims, the desecration of Sikh places of worship and curbs on the Christian missionaries, and suppression of true feelings of Kashmiris as forming part of the same pattern of aggressive attitude against the minorities. It asserted that, "The Sikhs demand a space under the sun of free India wherein they can breathe the air of freedom."[10]

Khushwant Singh who never supported the demand for Punjabi *Suba*, in an article published in the *Sikh Review*, Calcutta, of September 1965, rationalised the support for the demand for "self-determined political status" to be in conformity with the Sikh litany *raj karega khalsa*, (Khalsa shall rule), sung in every Sikh temple day in and day out as part of the regular prayer. He added, "I do not consider the demand for a Sikh *Suba* communal, fissiparous or anti-national. On the contrary, I am convinced that only in a state where the Sikhs can assure themselves of the continuance of their traditions, can they play their full role as citizens of India. Such conditions do not obtain in the country today. There is a definite resurgence of Hinduism which threatens to engulf the minorities. The administration is unwilling or unable to suppress it. . . . I am sure that as soon as this *Suba* is constituted the Sikhs will overlook other grievances (fall in Sikh proportion in the services, ceiling on land, discrimination in granting of industrial licences, etc. often mentioned in Sikh circles). Such a Sikh *Suba* will strengthen, not weaken India. It will give the Sikhs a chance to say proudly, 'I am a Sikh. I am an Indian'."[11]

The Hindus were alarmed at these formulations. It was very natural for them to rally around Sant Fateh Singh. Fateh Singh had been touring the Punjab for the last half a year to establish rapport with the people of the Punjab and establish branches of his Akali Dal. His talks with Lal Bahadur Shastri on August 7, 1965, are to be seen in this light. The Sant, despite the change in the nuances, which the Hindu press was prone to see in his attitude vis a vis that of Tara Singh, could not but be influenced by the vitiated atmosphere.

The talks between Sant Fateh Singh and Lal Bahadur Shastri were spread over two days, August 7-8, 1965. Fateh Singh was assisted by Man Singh of the *Mansarover* weekly Delhi, Arjan Singh Budhiraja, Uttam Singh Duggal, M.P., and Lachhman Singh Gill, M.L.A. The Prime Minister had with him Gulzari Lal Nanda, Union Home Minister, and government officials.

Opening the talks, Sant Fateh Singh stated, "Purely on the basis of language, our demand for a Punjabi *Suba* is constitutional." He did not want to enter into percentages. When other states in India had been formed on the basis of language, non-formation of Punjabi *Suba* was discriminatory against the people of Punjab, pure and simple. He pointed to 12,000 people courting arrest in 1955, and over 57,000 in 1960; then there was violence and cruelty meted to the Sikh processionists in Delhi on June 12, 1960, when truckloads were thrown into the Jumna river. He contended that

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during "the entire course of freedom struggle, half that number had not courted arrests, and yet the country was free." He did not want to go into figures of Hindus and Sikhs. His demand was based purely on language.[12]

There was silence of about three minutes. Shastri, Nanda, and the officials did not mutter a word. Was Shastri thinking a course different from the one taken by his mentor, Nehru? On merits, probably. But his hands were not free. The poison spread by Nehru against Punjabi *Suba* was very much green. Nehru's "For Eyes Only" note for his successors constituted a major stumbling block.

Fateh Singh breaking the silence stated, "We have come to talk. Shastriji, why have you become silent?".

Shastri pointed to the Sant's free and frank talks with the late Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, and said, "Punjabi is the language of the whole of the Punjab and efforts are being made for its development." That set the talks going.

Fateh Singh pointed out that earlier Kairon had at least introduced Punjabi at district level, but now even that had been discontinued, and progress was towards its annihilation. And, "Now, even our religion is no longer safe." He dilated on various sacrilegious incidents which had put the community in pain. The Government had done nothing. He also referred to the offensive remarks by Dr. Sushila Nayar on Sikhism and the Sikh Gurus. And, also by Vinobha Bhave. Thereafter, he highlighted that the Sikh spirit in the armed forces was being crushed with soldiers being encouraged to shave off their beards and sacred *keshas*. Again, when the Government was raising monuments for Hindu martyrs in the freedom struggle, none was being raised for the Sikh martyrs. He cited various instances. Thereafter, talks centered around various grievances -misrepresentation of the Sikhs in the text books, continuous injustice to the Sikhs in the Terai area of U.P., injustice to Punjabi farmers in Rajasthan, ignoring of Punjabi language by Jalandhar Radio, victimisation of the Sikhs in services, etc. The height of discrimination was non-conceding of the Punjabi *Suba*.

Sant Fateh Singh contended that if the opposition of a section of the people, say, in the division of Bombay, was not a factor in the formation of other provinces, why that should be an overriding principle to obstruct the Punjabi speaking state. At Nanda's instance, the Union Home Secretary stated that the Sikhs would constitute 60 percent in Punjabi *Suba*. Arjan Singh Budhiraja on the basis of 1961 census contended that they would be 50 percent. Home Secretary was right. He was aware of the extent to which the census of 1961 had been falsified, and Hindu population inflated.

Shastri mentioned of Nehru's views, "that this will be a dangerous step." Nanda twice during the talks conceded that the demand was constitutionally justified, but pleaded present time of emergency. Shastri wanted the Sant to postpone it now.

The Sant brought in the communal attitude of the Judge in the Paonta incident. "The Sikhs are being insulted everywhere, and no heed is paid to their grievances. No body listens to them. A nation of lion-hearted men have been reduced to such a low level, as to make them beg for mercy from persons who are no match for them", said the Sant with, a heavy heart. "Already they are seething with rage against injustices."[13]

Shastri spelled out his objective to be, to keep the Punjab united.

The talks came as a total disappointment to Sant Fateh Singh and his Akali Dal. He, on August 16, announced from the holy Akal Takht to a huge crowd of 25,000, of his resolve to go on fast-unto-death, from September 10, inside the Golden Temple. In case he survived the first 15 days of the fast, he would self-immolate himself on the 16th day. This came as a great jolt. One hundered people offered to follow the same line.

Tara Singh Akali Dal announced its full support to Sant Fateh Singh's threatened fast and self-immolation "to arouse the conscience of the rulers of India in favour of immediate creation of the Punjabi *Suba* and the recognition of it as an important step towards the realisation of the final destiny of the Sikh people in free India."[14]

Already the demand for 'self-determined' political status had jolted the Central Congress leadership. But it could not come out of the communal mire in which it had enmeshed itself. G. L. Nanda on August 23, in Parliament spoke of "two linguistic groups" in the Punjab in terms of Hindus and Sikhs, not in terms of Punjabis and non-Punjabis/Hindvis/Haryanvis.

The situation on India-Pakistan frontiers was taking a turn for the worst because of infiltration. 15 Members of Parliament appealed to Sant Fateh Singh to suspend his fast and self-immolation. The Sant was not moved. The situation by end of August was grim and the Indian forces captured Haji Pir Pass on August 30. The following day, 15 Congress M.L.A.s of Punjab Assembly, including Giani Kartar Singh, at Chandigarh expressed their view that central government should accept the demand in principle, and defer its implementation to a later date. The Hindu members of Parliament including Dewan Chaman Lal opposed the demand. The central government at this crucial stage appointed Ujjal Singh as Punjab Governor on September 1, 1965. This was indicative of flexibility in the government's policy. President, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan was playing a silent role from behind the scenes.

The Haryana leaders now activated themselves and opposed either declaring the whole of Punjab as Punjabi-speaking state or dismembering of Hindi zone to increase the ratio of Punjabi-renegade Hindus in the Punjab.

The entry of Indian armed forces in Lahore sector from three sides on September 6, made Nanda to announce in Lok Sabha the willingness of the Government of India to hold fresh talks on Punjabi Suba with an open mind. It was a product of the process of doubletalk. If the mind was open then what was there to talk to. If it was designed as a sop to the Sikhs, it was misplaced. The Sikh mind was not in conflict at all. It were only the wanton Nehruites who had been doubting their loyalty. They had always spoken in terms of making Punjab a strong border state. They never realised that a contented people was worth several armed forces Divisions.

A deputation of five emissaries of Sant Fateh Singh met Home Minister, Nanda, on September 8, 1965. They were reported to have been given some assurances. The following day, Sant Fateh Singh decided to postpone his fast on the advice of the Working Committee. President Radhakrishnan who was playing an active, behind the scene role, in a broadcast on September 11, stated that Sant Fateh Singh "will be satisfied with the eventual solution of this problem agreed to by the leaders of Punjab."[15]

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The army was heroically supplied by civilian (read Sikh) population in its three-pronged thrust in the Lahore sector. The Army authorities acknowledged the significant role played by civilians in the conflict. The performance of civilian truck drivers was spectacular. The Sikh peasantry rose as one man to back the troops in providing the *Jawans* their provisions - the basic necessities of life. The zeal, enthusiasm and daring spirit displayed by the populace put to shame the Punjabi-renegade Hindus and their cohorts - the cohorts of Satan. Purposely, the government did nothing to remove from the mind of its partisans the vicious poison spread during the Nehru era.

The scheming Hindu mind had many a trick up its sleeves. Instead of straightaway effecting a division of the Punjab on the basis of linguistic zones, as was done in case of Bombay, they resorted to subterfuges of Committees and Commissions to take with one hand, what they had to concede with the other. Their mind was not clean.

After the ceasefire on September 26, Gulzari Lal Nanda was for, what he said, a 'co-operative solution' based on goodwill and a reasonable approach. A Parliamentary Consultative Committee with Hukam Singh, Speaker of Lok Sabha, as its President, was set up. The Parliamentary Consultative Committee was to arrive at a decision in consultation with a Cabinet Committee consisting of Y.B. Chavan, Indira Gandhi, and Mahavir Tyagi.

The Parliamentary Consultative Committee was to be constituted by the Speaker of Lok Sabha and Chairman of Rajya Sabha. Gulzari Lal Nanda who had serious reservations, forwarded names both from Rajya Sabha through it Chairman and of Lok Sabha to the Speaker. Hukam Singh accepted the names from Rajya Sabha forwarded through its Chairman, but effected changes in those from Lok Sabha. Hukam Singh, earlier during an informal discussion with Nanda, had mentioned that Punjabi *Suba* would eventually not be in the interests of the Sikhs. The Hindu partisans thought that they would be able to get an adverse report and scuttle the demand for Punjabi *Suba*, using Hukam Singh as a scapegoat.[16]

Sant Akali Dal on October 11, 1965, stated that it would have preferred the government to have accepted the demand for Punjabi *Suba*, as Hindi and Punjabi regions were already demarcated. It now wanted the Parliamentary Consultative Committee to complete its work soon. The Master Akali Dal on November 2, welcomed "the decision to form Punjabi Suba on linguistic basis which was not to be confused with the political demand of the Sikh people as such."[17]

The setting up of the Committee activated the communal Hindu elements. As expected. Chief Minister Ram Kishan opposed bifurcation of Punjab, and the Congress Legislature Party on October 6, endorsed his views. The. Punjab Congress on October 11,1965, decided to submit a memorandum to oppose Punjabi *Suba*. Legislators from Haryana marshalled themselves to oppose the possible declaration of Punjab as a unilingual Punjabi speaking state, or dismemberment of Haryana. Ram Kishan again on October 21, 1965, stated that the state Cabinet was opposed to the division of Punjab. He was supported by Gurdial Singh Dhillon, Prabodh Chandra, Yash and Darbara Singh. The sub-committee set up by Provincial Congress Committee wanted merger of Himachal Pradesh with the Punjab, and division of the state into three zones of Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh. The Punjab Congress sponsored Ekta (Unity) Samiti, in its memorandum to the Parliamentary Consultative Committee, conveyed serious suspicions about the loyalty of the Sikhs to India and expressed apprehensions that the Sikhs would join hands with Pakistan once the Punjabi *Suba* was formed.[18]

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This led to an adjournment motion in Punjab Vidhan Sabha on November 3, 1965, over the issue of "the arrogant and insulting remarks made in the memorandum on the linguistic reorganistion of the Punjab as drafted by the Ekta Samiti." Gurnam Singh, visibly agitated, stated "We cannot tolerate these insults. Have Hindus taken the monopoly of loyalty to the country?"[19] They had!

The government's intention was that Parliamentary Consultative Committee would submit its report to the government which would have an overriding role to whet its recommendations. But the Parliamentary Consultative Committee under the leadership of Hukam Singh took the stand, and correctly, that no Parliamentary Committee presided over by the Speaker could make its recommendations to any one except the Parliament.

Shastri, Nanda and Indira Gandhi were fulminating at the turn of the events. "The intention of the Government" in the words of Hukam Singh "was to use me against my community, secure an adverse report, and then reject the demand, even after 18 long years of deliberate frustrating delays."[20]

With Shastri's death at Tashkent and induction of Indira Gandhi as Prime Minister on January 20, 1966, Nehruvian line was back with vengeance. She wanted to circumvent the Parliamentary Consultative Committee, which was known to be sympathetic to a favourable solution of the Punjabi *Suba* issue. She invited Fateh Singh for talks with Cabinet sub-committee. Fateh Singh wisely declined to fall into the trap. He also stated that the Central Government had already taken six months, and he could not wait any longer. President of Master Akali Dal, Giani Bhupinder Singh, on February 26, 1966, declared that even the establishment of Punjabi Suba would not be the final and permanent solution of the Sikh problems. The following day, the Master Akali Dal reiterated its resolve to secure for the Sikhs "self-determined political status within the Republic of the Union of India."[21] These made Fateh Singh to issue a press statement on February 28, that he would wait for another four weeks, and then revive his programme.

The Punjabi-renegade communal Hindus were seething with rage for entrusting the issue of linguistic reorganisation of Punjab to a Parliamentary Committee, and that too headed by Hukam Singh. Hindu industrialists threatened large scale migrations.

The report of the Parliamentary Consultative Committee seemed a foregone conclusion, recommending a neat division of the state on the basis of recognised linguistic zones.[22] Indira was livid with rage. Her memoirs. *My Truth*, (Delhi, 1981) fully reflect her determination to safeguard Hindu sectarian interests. She saw the formation of Punjabi speaking state as a first step to the fulfilling of projections made by the astrologers (in early 1960s when they were performing jantra-mantra-tantra fetishes for prolongation of Jawaharlal Nehru's life) that the Sikhs were destined by end of the century to reaffirm their national self-assertion. One of them, Haveli Ram, had passed this on to Master Tara Singh as well. The astrologers did not spell out that the Sikhs would be doing so not as much because of their own exertions as because of Brahminical India's restructuring its polity, or possibly committing suicide. Anyhow, Indira decided that the Sikh victory had to be vitiated with poisonous reeds.

It were with these malicious considerations in mind, she decided to pre-empt the Parliamentary Consultative Committee Report by a week. She had a resolution adopted by the Congress Working Committee on March 9, 1966, accepting the formation of Punjabi speaking

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state.[23] This enabled her to bypass the recommendations of the Parliamentary Consultative Committee and proceed ahead to vitiate the whole process, so that the end product was not palatable.[24]

The communal Hindus, not understanding Indira's game plan, were wild at Congress's acceptance of the formation of Punjabi *Suba*. They went on complete strike in Punjab for three days. There were numerous cases of arson at Amritsar, Ludhiana, Panipat. The police had to open fire at several places. Several were killed and wounded. 2528 persons were arrested. The communal divide came as an eye-opener to the Sikhs, because they had not done their homework.

Speaking in Lok Sabha on March 15, 1966, Indira assured the Punjabi-renegade Hindus that their interests would be safeguarded. Even now the much maligned Master Tara Singh stated, "Basically, we cannot be separated from Hindus as our culture is the same. But I am opposed to the domination."[25] That was the precise problem!

The Hindus, and for that matter the Congress, were not willing to let the Sikhs have their way. The Hindus of all denominations, Jan Sangh, Ekta Samiti, Arya Samaj including the Congressites waited on Home Minister Nanda on March 20, 1966, and discussed certain proposals to deal crippling blows to the Punjabi *Suba*. The Congress leaders from Haryana too mobilised themselves. It was as a result of all around consultations that Indira proceeded to act as a petty politician and load the reference to the Shah Commission against the Punjab by making the 1961 census as the basis and Tehsil, instead of village as the unit. The government was fully aware, that 1961 census gave bloated figures of Hindus, apart from large scale falsification of the mother tongue, that had been resorted to at the time, by the Punjabi Hindus.

There was again a breeze of fresh thinking on Punjab by the national leadership of both Jan Sangh and Rashtriya Swym Sewak Sangh. For instance, Balraj Madhok in his presidential address to Jan Sangh in April 1966 pleaded for his party's acceptance of the division of Punjab on linguistic basis and berated the "extremist elements among the Akalis and the Arya Samajists" who were dissatisfied with the reorganisation.[26] He and RSS leader M.S. Golwalkar, who toured Punjab in April 1966 urged the Hindus of Punjab to acknowledge Punjabi as a legitimate language and Gurmukhi a proper script for the Hindus to accept.[27] Again, as in 1960, it was the anti-Sikh family traditions of descendants of Ganga Dhar Kaul alias Gangu Brahmin that held the sway.

Sant Fateh Singh was disturbed at the formulations of the Congress leaders. In his telegram of April 13, 1966, to Prime Minister, he unsuccessfully pleaded for pre-partition census and not those of 1961, taken at the height of Punjabi *Suba* agitation which had mad large sections of Punjabi Hindus to disown their mother tongue.

The appointment of a Commission four days later proved the worst fears of Fateh Singh. The Commission consisted of a sitting Supreme Court Judge, J.C. Shah, and two retired civil servants, S. Dutt and M.M. Philip. None of them could understand a decca of Punjabi, to objectively ponder over the "linguistic homogeneity", they were required to look into. The false and spurious 1961 census were made the fulcrum of the Commission's operations to deprive Punjabi *Suba* of its legitimate rights.

The Sant Akali Dal in its detailed representation to the Shah Commission claimed the entire district of Ambala, all tehsils of Karnal except Panipat tehsil, Sirsa and subtehsils of Fatehabad and

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Guhla in Hissar district as part of Punjabi *suba*, besides the already demarcated Punjabi region.[28] The Sikh members of the Punjab Assembly also advocated the inclusion of Kangra, as it was a Punjabi speaking area. But Hindu members, including Ministers from Punjabi region would not sign a memorandum on these lines.

That showed that the Akali mind was not working for a Sikh majority state, but one based purely on language. It was Indira, and for that matter her father's resolve, inter alia, to prevent division of U.P. as a fallout of linguistic reorganisation of Punjab, that muddled the whole atmosphere. To checkmate the Sikhs was one objective. The other was to keep the people of Haryana involved in one imbroglio after another with the people of Punjab to prevent their looking westwards to Jat unity, causing a possible three pronged division of U.P., her bastion of power, and also liberation of Jats from Brahmin-Bania clutches.

The Shah Commission worked in a most arbitrary manner. It declared certain areas hilly, and transferred those to Himachal Pradesh, irrespective of the language of the people. The Commission declared Districts Gurdaspur (excluding Dalhousie, Balun and Bukloh), Amritsar, Kapurthala, Jalandhar, Ferozepur, Bhatinda, Patiala, Ludhiana, and Tehsils Barnala, Malerkotla and Sangrur of Sangrur District, Tehsil Ropar of Ambala District, Tehsil Dasuya, Hoshiarpur and Garhshankar, and Development blocks Anandpur, Nurpurbedi and village Kherabagh, Samipur, Bhabhaur and Kalseh from Una block and village Kosri in Una Tehsil from Hoshiarpur District to form Punjabi speaking state.[29]

The Commission applied with vengeance its discretion in depriving Punjab of as much area as it could, as if it was a case of secession. Shah and Philip awarded especially built for Punjab, the Chandigarh Capital project and the Kharar Tehsil of which it formed a part, to Haryana. Dutt, however, argued that Chandigarh during 1961 census had a large migratory labour from U.P. and Rajasthan which made it a marginally Hindi speaking area. Excluding that segment, the area was Punjabi speaking. This was supported by the Sachar formulae of 1949. Himachal came out to be the biggest gainer.[30]

As a result of the web created by herself, Indira implemented the minority report but kept Chandigarh as a centrally administered territory, shared by both the Punjab and Haryana.[31] Not only that, the Central Government took over control over Bhakra Dam and reservoir and works apertunent thereto, Nangal Dam and Nangal Hydel Channel, and Kotla Power House, the Irrigation Head Works at Ropar, Harike, and Ferozepur, Bhakra Power Houses, Ganguwal and Kotla Power Houses through the Bhakra Management Board; and the Pong Dam project and connected power houses. These provisions taking away Water and Power resources from the Punjab smacked of worst distrust of the Sikhs, their loyalty and bonafides as Indian citizens. This was unprecedented, unique and fully discriminatory, not practiced on the formation of any other Hindu-dominated states. The Sikhs were made to feel that they were third rate, if not unwanted, citizens of second rate state.

Another feature of the states reorganisation bill was the unique feature of Punjab and Haryana having "the common links between the two states which provided for a common Governor, a common High Court, a common University, common Electricity Board and Warehousing Corporation, a common State Finance Corporation, etc."[32]

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The Master Akali Dal summed up the Sikh's pique in a resolution adopted on July 20, 1966, which spoke of the Sikhs' resolve and proclaiming "their determination to resist, through all legitimate means, all attempts to devalue and liquidate the Sikh people in a free India". It spelt out the areas left out of the new Punjab which should be included and stated that "such a new Punjab should be granted an autonomous constitutional status on the analogy of the status of Jammu and Kashmir as was envisaged in the Constitution Act of India in the year 1950."[33] It also had to say something about the employment of judiciary for quasi-political purposes against the Sikhs when it stated,

> "AFTER HAVING CAREFULLY VIEWED the findings, the reports and judgements of judicial and quasi-judicial Tribunals and Forums that have dealt with matters and cases involving important Sikh interests, COMES TO THE CONCLUSION, that the entire judicial machinery and judicial process of the Independent India, under influence of certain section of political Hindus, is prejudiced and has been perverted against the Sikh people in India in relation to their just and legal rights."[34]

Kapur Singh speaking in Lok Sabha on the Punjab Reorganisation Bill on September 6, stated that "it will almost certainly lead to a weakening of national integration and loss of faith in the integrity of those who exercise political power in the country."[35]

The Sant Akali Dal in a resolution dubbed the Shah Commission "to be the worst type of communal commission." Sant Fateh Singh on his return from abroad said that "the Punjab Boundary Commission Report smacks of communalism" and declared that "Chandigarh at no cost will be allowed to remain out of Punjabi *Suba*." Tara Singh on September 14, 1966, termed the new Punjabi Suba as yet another move to enslave the Sikhs. Meanwhile, President's rule was imposed in the Punjab and Ujjal Singh replaced by Dharma Vira I.C.S. in June 1966 to work out Indira's nefarious plans.

Instead of letting politics in the reorganised state of Punjab to follow the non-sectarian course, Indira Gandhi created in the Hindus a sense of euphoria at their maiming and disabling the Punjabi *Suba* at its birth. This also encouraged them not to adopt a conciliatory attitude towards their Sikh neighbours, and continue their policy of confrontation.

Sant Fateh Singh instead of broadening the field of his political operations was forced to lick his wounds and concentrate on the removal of discriminatory provisions, besides inclusion of left over Punjabi speaking areas from Punjab. On the top of it, as envisaged by Indira Gandhi, Haryana people got fully enmeshed in their imbroglios with Punjab.

If Sant Fateh Singh said that Punjabi Suba was the 'last demand' of the Punjabis including the Sikhs, Indira by various contrivances was determined to destablise the Sikh polity. She did not want the Sikhs "to be accepted in the mainstream and saw to it that they were continually fen the run.

The new states of Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh came into being on November 1, 1966.

Sant Fateh Singh was back on November 5, after a long foreign tour.[36] His absence during this crucial period was untimely.

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The formation of Punjabi *Suba* did not free the Akalis from the need to continue their agitational approach. Fateh Singh was again back with threats of self-immolation.

At the conference convened by him on November 10, 1966, the representatives of Communists, Swatantra Party, Republican Party, and the SSP extended their full support for the contemplated agitation for abolition of common links and inclusion of Punjabi speaking areas and Chandigarh in Punjab. Fateh Singh was clear that what was at stake was for the Sikhs to live in the country "with respect and honour", though he spoke of the cause of the Punjabis. A *Jatha* of 75, despatched from Amritsar on November 16, 1966, split into three groups, and preached against communal approach of the Central government. The *Jathas* were arrested before they reached Chandigarh.

The Punjab government on December 1, decided to bifurcate the Electricity Board and disrupt all the common links under its jurisdiction. The Central government also announced that it had an open mind on Chandigarh. Indira Gandhi wrote to Fateh Singh in the matter.[37]

On December 5, 1966, the Sant Akali Dal called on the Punjabis to observe December 12, as a protest day. It directed the people to wear black badges and observe a complete hartal. Sant Fateh Singh announced his decision to go on a fast unto death on December 17, and resort to self-immolation on December 27, if he survived the fast. The Sant accused the Central Government of extreme discrimination, perverse attitude and holding out threats to suppress the Sikhs.

This again brought Punjab to the edge of a precipice. People were in commotion. Tara Singh lent support to Fateh Singh and went "a step further". He demanded "an autonomous status for Punjab in order to provide a real Homeland for the Sikhs." Giani Bhupinder Singh, President, Master Akali Dal perceptibly added that, "This communal and narrow minded Government will never treat us as equals. We should understand that there is no place for justice and equality for us in this country. Hence our lives, honour, property and even our religion are in danger."[38]

As usual appeals by the Union Home Minister, Y.B. Chavan, and Prime Minister to Sant Fateh Singh followed. There was even a proposal to have a referendum in the areas claimed for Punjab. This was turned down. Jaya Prakash Narayan accompanied by J. J. Singh of America saw Fateh Singh on December 15. Prime Minister too made a last minute appeal to him. The following day, Chief Minister Gurmukh Singh Musafir and Defence Minister Swaran Singh in a joint statement expressed themselves against 'unreasonable' demands of Sant Fateh Singh. Fateh Singh, as scheduled, began his fast on December 17, 1966, on the third floor of the holy Akal Takht. Before doing so, he spelt out his demands to be: a) abolition of common links; b) return of Chandigarh and Dam projects held by the Central government; and c) inclusion of the Punjabi speaking areas.

This increased the tempo of activity. Hukam Singh and Gurmukh Singh Musafir on December 21, 1966, visited the Sant who refused to accept any compromise formulae. The Punjab government by that time arrested 1927 prominent Sikh leaders. Troops marched in the streets of Amritsar on Christmas day, December 25, to exhibit the awe and imperial majesty of the central government or Delhi Durbar. The same day, a 48 hour curfew was clamped on the walled area of the city.

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On December 27, 1966, Hukam Singh was flown by a special plane to Amritsar, where he reached one hour before the scheduled self-immolation by the Sant. He was straightaway closeted with the Sant and according to Fateh Singh gave him "almost a solemn assurance from Akal Takht that Chandigarh would go to Punjab. "The Central government also decided to appoint a committee to recommend the future of left out areas from Punjab. Amidst these dubious assurances, Sant Fateh Singh's breaking his fast came as an anticlimax.[39] Meanwhile, Gurnam Singh who was opposed to any spurious assurances had been taken into custody.

We may now pause here to have an assessment of the role of Sikh politicians in the Punjab imbroglio. Baldev Raj Nayar in his mis-titled book *Minority Politics in Punjab*,[40] published few months before the formation of Punjabi Suba, which he never foresaw, divided the Sikh leaders into three categories.

The first category, according to him, consisted of those who consistently demonstrated their opposition to what he stated, "Akali Dal, its demand for Punjabi Suba and, its other communal demands."[41] He included Kairon and Gurdial Singh Dhillon in this category.

The second category according to him was of those Sikh leaders who opposed Akali Dal "on a non-communal basis". He included only Hukam Singh in this category. The third category, consisted of those who found membership of the Congress as "a suitable instrument for the pursuit of either personal or community goals", but were ready to foresake the party the moment such goals were frustrated. He placed Giani Kartar Singh and some other Sikh leaders in this category.[42]

As a matter of fact, Nayar had been too restrictive in drawing his lists. The first category would include Partap Singh Kairon the "slave overseer. . . more heartless than any alien beast" and all those who were willing tools in the hands of communal Hindu leadership. These would include Gurdial Singh Dhillon,[43] Swaran Singh,[44] Gurmukh Singh Mussafir,[45] and Darbara Singh.[46] Giani Zail Singh from this category was later kicked high and did greater damage to the Sikh people, by serving as a thoughtless crony of Brahmins. The second category would consist of those who by force of circumstances happened to join the Congress and operate from that platform, but kept in view the blatant discrimination to which the Sikhs were being subjected. When the time came they arose, as they could, to safeguard the Sikh interests. Prominent among those would be Giani Kartar Singh[47], Hukam Singh and a host of others. One, however, tends to feel that both of them, once Indira Gandhi had made a mess on introduction of Punjab Reorganisation Bill, should have resigned in protest.

With the creation of Punjabi *Suba*, the Sikhs entered half a decade of creative part of their modern history. The celebrations of tricentenary of Guru Gobind Singh's birth in 1966-67, were marked by a profuse production of literature on various aspects of Sikhism -history, biography, literature, religion and philosophy. The Sikhs reflected a "settled and consolidated psyche."[48] The green revolution came to fruition in the Punjab in the second half of 1960s bringing prosperity to the people. The emigration of the Sikhs from East Africa to U.K. introduced a new and healthy element in the burgeoning Sikh community in Great Britain, while Yogi Harbhajan Singh achieved a phenomenal success in spreading the message of the Gurus to the white Americans in the United States of America.

Another facet of the consolidated Sikh psyche was the introduction of half an hour evening programme of *Shabad-Kirtan* and *Shabad-Katha* on Jalandhar station of All India Radio in 1966. This

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was done as a reaction to Radio Pakistan's introduction of half an hour programme in the evening which included *Shabad-kirtan* and was followed by five minutes discourse from the forgotten pages of Sikh history. These discourses highlighted the inimical moves and actions of Brahminical Hindus against the Sikhs and Sikhism right from the beginning of the Sikh movement down to the present day.

The author being head of research cell in Pakistan Division of the Indian Foreign Office at the time was regular reader of the monitoring of Radio Pakistan and other world Radio stations. He found that incidents narrated over Radio Pakistan of Hindus malfeasance against the Sikhs, at the time seemingly couched in provocative language, had a kernel of truth in them. The Pakistan Radio programme had become extremely popular in Indian Punjab, and the people craved to listen to *gurbani*. The Government of India regarded this as a hostile propaganda. To counter it, at the instance of Indian High Commissioner in Islamabad, the Indian authorities reluctantly agreed to the introduction of *gurbani* programme over Jalandhar Radio station to wean the people away from Lahore Radio. The end result was a gain for the Sikhs.

The consolidated Sikh psyche had little impact, if at all, on the Sikhs in the armed forces. The trend towards shedding of *keshas* continued, though some Sikh Generals provided a corrective to the malaise. The armed forces officers continued to give un-Sikh names to their children, especially daughters. They mostly dropped Kaur from their names. This had an unhealthy impact on their mental make up.

The formation of Punjabi *Suba* was shortly afterwards followed by the general elections in February 1967. The Congress came out cropper in northern India. Despite sharp shortfall in the number of votes polled, thanks to the Indian electoral system, it managed a bare majority with 283 out of 520 seats in the Lok Sabha. But it lost power in all states in northern India, so that one could travel by train from Calcutta to Amritsar without passing through a single Congress ruled state.

The Akalis were split, led by Fateh Singh and Master Tara Singh whose influence was on the wane. Both the groups polled 24.69 percent votes and secured 26 seats (with Master group getting bare 2 seats) out of 104 seats in the Punjab legislature. Congress secured 48 seats, with 37.46 percent votes. As the Congress had lost its overall majority for the first time since 1947, all opposition groups - two Akali Dais, two Communist Parties, Jan Sangh, Republicans and Independents (save Balbir Singh of SSP) in a clever move coalesced and formed a United Front of disparate elements under the leadership of Gurnam Singh, former leader of the opposition. He had joined Sant Akali Dai before the elections. They drew a 10 point minimum programme, a clever adjustment of different ideologies.[49]

Gurnam Singh government during its tenure of 8 months could not make Punjabi an official language of the new state of Punjab. It had a bare majority and Jan Sangh was bitterly opposed to this measure. This enabled Lachhman Singh Gill, a Contractor of Delhi, , who knew the weaknesses of both the Akali Dais, to win over 17 MLAs. Gurnam Singh government fell on November 22, 1967.[50] Lachhman Singh Gill four days later formed the defectors government with Congress support. One of the important members of this government was Dr. Jagjit Singh Chauhan, Finance Minister, about whom later.

Gill was able to push through Official Languages Bill introducing Punjabi in Gurmukhi script as the official language of the new state of Punjab. That was quite creditable. Otherwise, Gill

had nothing to show. The row he had with the Speaker, who survived the no confidence motion and adjourned the Assembly, and the questionable manner in which he pushed through the Budget drew adverse verdict from the Punjab High Court.[51] The Supreme Court reversed the judgment, out of necessity, but ensured that Gill ministry had to go. Congress withdrew its support and this resulted in introduction of President's rules as a prelude to mid-term polls.

Congress was led in the Punjab Assembly by Gian Singh Rarewala who had a frustrating experience with the Congress High Command. His statement on his resignation from the Congress in November 1968 about Congress attempts to crush the Sikh leadership was quite revealing of the attitude of the Congress Hindu mind.

Sant Akali Dal tried to make up with Master Akali Dal on the eve of the mid-term polls. The only point of difference between the two was Master Akali Dal's 'Sikh Homeland'.

A committee constituted at Batala Akali Conference on September 30, 1968, "to bring about Panthic unity" gave a new programme of "reconsideration of the State-Central relationship" under the changed conditions. "The Shiromani Akali Dal demands that the Constitution of India should be on a correct federal basis and that the states should have greater autonomy. The Shiromani Akali Dal feels that the Central Government's interference in the internal affairs of the States, and the obstacles it places in the proper functioning of the state machinery, are detrimental to the unity and integrity of the country. . . "Therefore, Shiromani Akali Dal demanded that necessary changes be brought in the Constitution. It also appealed to "the State Governments to raise their voices to protect and safeguard their rights."[52]

The United Akali Dal made a shrewd move to enter into an electoral alliance with Jan Sangh and other splinter groups on most of the seats. The prospects of unity between Hindus and Sikhs constituted a real threat to the Congress which had so far thrived on sowing suspicions between the two communities. The Congress leaders adopted a purely communal and fissiparous approach in scaring the Hindus away from the Sikhs. Deputy Prime Minister, Morarji Desai, termed Akali-Jan Sangh alliance as an 'unholy' one, as, in his words, "Akalis were demanding a Sikh state and the Jan Sangh stood for Hindu *Raj*."[53] This Hindu-Sikh unity was poison to Congress and must be torpedoed to make Punjab safe for it.

In the February 1969 elections, Akalis won 44 seats and had the support of 5 Communists and Marxists. Again, this time under the leadership of Gurnam Singh, Akal is formed a coalition government with the 9 member Jan Sangh group, to instill confidence in the Hindu minority.

The government faced various storms. To begin with were the efforts by Arya Samajists and All-Parties Hindi Raksha Sammelan to prevent the introduction of All-India Three Language Formulae with Punjabi as first compulsory language in Punjab. As a result of the built up, a compromise solution was announced on July 15, 1969, to permit "status quo regarding medium of instruction in private aided schools". Then followed from August 15, 1969, the fast unto death of Darshan Singh Pheruman. This was designed to embarrass the Akali Dal. Actually, Pheruman had been in search of an issue to fast unto death. His original testament, of which Dr. Jagjit Singh Chauhan was a witness, stated the object to be establishment of a Sikh Homeland. However, Gurnam Singh made him change that to the merger of Chandigarh with Punjab. The Congress leadership watched the situation bemused. Some took it as a Congress manoeuvre to weaken the

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leadership of Sant Fateh Singh. Others regarded Pheruman's fast to be in complete accord with the programme of Akali Dal.

Indira Gandhi by the time was facing a life and death struggle with the syndicate, which was bent upon removing her. The issue was in the forefront in the Presidential elections in July - August 1969 - V.V. Giri whom she finally supported versus Sanjiva Reddy, originally proposed by her. Akalis had the bargaining power and could have negotiated with Indira Gandhi or others for satisfaction on issues which agitated them. Or simply, they could have announced till the very last their standing apart from the ensuing contest to draw maximum advantage. Already, they had bitter experience with the Nehru family - both Nehru and Indira who had been out and out Sikh baiters. Even her defeat would not have been unwelcome. But Gurnam Singh faltered in offering her support. The fact that -finally the Akali vote tilted the balance in Giri's favour yielded them nothing. Even the Akalis remaining neutral would have seen him lose. Akalis should have known that gratitude has no place in politics. Not being adept in the game, they wasted the opportunity to rue later.

Indira was now on high road to establishing a personalised rule with loyalty to her being equated with loyalty to the nation.[54] She was now in a much better position to carry forward her family vendetta against the Sikhs. The forces of evil had been greatly strengthened.

Pheruman's fast created a piquant situation for Sant Fateh Singh. He wrote to Indira Gandhi on August 25, 1969, and asked for a decision on Chandigarh, Bhakra Dam project and Punjabi speaking areas in Haryana. The timing could not be more inappropriate. The various manoeuvres led to formation of an All Parties Action Committee comprising representatives of seven political parties including the Punjab Congress on September 28, 1969. Akalis, Communists and Jan Sangh organised a huge mass procession of three to five hundred thousands on October 17, 1969, from Mohali to Chandigarh to secure Chandigarh for the Punjab.

Pheruman died on October 27, 1969, on 74th day of his fast in fulfilment of his vow. It created a deep stir in Punjab and made Union Home Minister, Y.B. Chavan to declare that a decision on Chandigarh would be announced before the Budget Session of 1970. Fateh Singh too announced his firm determination to go on fast unto death on January 26, 1970, and commit self-immolation on February 1, at 3 p.m., if Chandigarh was not merged into Punjab by then. His written statement spoke of his having delayed the whole process for over three years on assurances by the Centre. Now, when all political parties in Punjab were supporting merger of Chandigarh with Punjab, there *was* no excuse for the delay.

The All World Panthic Convention of the Sikhs held on January 10, 1970, adopted the resolution of the Working Committee of the Shiromani Akali Dal of a day earlier. The resolution stated, "It is the considered opinion of the Working Committee that after partition, the Government of India's attitude towards the Punjabis in general and the Sikhs in particular is one of great injustice, discrimination, oppression, *Zulum*, and violence. It is part of history." It also accused the central government of "fraud, oppression and injustice of a low order" in snatching "from the Punjabi-speaking state Chandigarh, Bhakra complex and some Punjabi-speaking areas." It was reflective of deep frustration of the community's reaching "the bitter conclusion that unheard of and unthought of discrimination is being resorted to against the Punjab."[55]

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Sant Fateh Singh went on fast as scheduled. The central government on January 29, 1970, through a press Communique further complicated the situation by agreeing to transfer Chandigarh (minus certain areas forming part of Hindi zone and tagged to Chandigarh on its becoming union territory) to Punjab, but gratuitously transferring part of Fazilka tehsil of Ferozepur district to Haryana. This was unprecedented. Andhra did not get anything for losing Madras. Nor did Gujarat for giving up claims to Bombay. But in Punjab, the Centre was bent upon drawing the last drop of blood to cripple Punjab. It also helped to create another point of conflict between Punjab and Haryana to keep them embroiled, and prevent attention being paid to Jat unity.

Since the area transferred was not contiguous, the Communique provided for a corridor of one *furlong* on Punjab-Rajasthan borders. This idea of corridor was borrowed from Mr. Jinnah's asking for 5 mile wide corridor through India to link two parts of Pakistan which was then negatived by the Congress leaders. The Communique also spoke of a Commission for adjustment of areas between Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh. Modifications on Bhakra-Beas were to be considered later or were rather put off.[56] This caused protest among those gathered at Akal Takht. For the first time in Sikh history, the Sikhs committed the sacrilege and threw stones at Akal Takht in protest against the deal.

The All-Parties Action Committee on January 30, 1970, with Dr. Baldev Parkash of Jan Sangh in the Chair resolved that the idea of corridor was highly unjust, discriminatory, and deserved condemnation. The meeting appealed to the Sant to give up the fast since the merger of Chandigarh with the Punjab had been announced. Sant Fateh Singh broke his fast at 5.30 p.m. without any tangible achievement.

The Jan Sangh branches in Punjab and Haryana took different attitude depending upon the interests of the two states.

Punjab State Jan Sangh on February 1, 1970, described the decision of the Central government on Chandigarh and Fazilka as "most abject, humiliating, unjust and detrimental to the interests of Punjab." It described these to be "mainly based on non-secular considerations" and against justice and accepted linguistic principles. Gurnam Singh, Chief Minister, termed the decision "arbitrary" and communal, "to push Hindu villages into Haryana not on the basis of language but religion." He stoutly denied accusations of his being a partner in this barter deal. Come what may, Sarhadi considered Gurnam Singh of being no match to the political manoeuveres of the Central Congress leadership.[57]

Akalis were now in for crude surprises. Revolt of Gurnam Singh and some M.L.As in elections to Rajya Sabha on March 25, 1970, led to the defeat of official candidate Jathedar Santokh Singh and election of Giani Bhupinder Singh. Gurnam Singh had entered into some understanding with Congress to save his Ministry, but he was betrayed.[58] This sealed his fate. He was expelled from Akali Dal. Jan Sangh remained steadfast to its alliance with Shiromani Akali Dal.

On nomination by Sant Fateh Singh, Parkash Singh Badal on March 27, 1970, took over as Chief Minister. Badal did a great Job in checking violent Naxalite activity, and large scale smuggling of contraband from Pakistan.[59]

The efforts of Gurnam Singh to dislodge the Badal Ministry by a no-confidence motion was foiled because Congress remained neutral on the move. Indira Gandhi, running a minority

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government at the Centre because of break with the Syndicate, did not want to embroil herself in the Punjab imbroglio. Badal wanted Gian Singh Rarewala, who by now had joined Akali Dal, to play an active part. Gurcharan Singh Tohra had his own designs. He was in league with the Communists, and wanted to checkmate Rarewala.

Akali politics by now had become factional and canktankerous. This enabled the extraneous elements - the Congress and the Communists to play havoc with the Akalis.

Indira since her breaking the Congress party was heading a minority government. She was dependent upon the Communists who looked kindly to her various socialistic measures. She was heading towards a mid-term poll with vengeance, destroying all restraints. She was willing to placate those who could help her, infiltrate and destroy those who were weak. She gave full play to business and in generating 'black money'. Foreign powers too sent black money through diplomatic bags.[60] It was a free for all. Akalis marred by dissensions were the worst sufferers. The Communists were working for her victory.

The Akalis were now under attack from within and from without. They had no means to counter the mischief being wrought by Tohra and his cohort infiltrators; they were orchestrating the policies dictated by their parent party - the Communists. And, since, Tohra had a solid support of communist infiltrators in the SGPC and District Akali *Jathas*, he was more dangerous. Then, there was Gurnam Singh since won over by central Congress leadership and working in close collaboration with Tohra. Gurnam Singh was not reconciled to Badal's taking over as Chief Minister. The Jan Sangh too dittoed Gurnam Singh in that.

The Central Government with formidable resources at its disposal sought to create a chasm between Akalis and Jan Sangh, twice coalition partners in the last few years. Services of Dr. Jagjit Singh Chauhan were commissioned at political level in raising the slogan of Sikh Homeland.[61] Tohra was an important actor in that. Various intelligence agencies reported the widespread impression among the people that Chauhan was raising the slogan of Khalistan at the instance of Indira Congress."

The Akali Dal had been greatly weakened by Sant Fateh Singh's suffering a heart attack in September 1970. His protege Sant Chanan Singh suffered the same fate in another two weeks. To capitalise on the situation, Tohra gave a call for Panthic unity. For him, such calls were instruments of offence and deception. Now, as a result, Pheruman and Master groups merged themselves with Sant Akali Dal in November 1970; Gurnam Singh and Dr. Jagjit Singh Chauhan, both deeply in league with Indira Congress, were inducted into Akali Dal. Gurnam Singh took over as President of the Parliamentary Board, whereas Dr. Chauhan was appointed as one of the General Secretaries.

For mid-term polls to Lok Sabha, Dr. Chauhan prepared a draft manifesto for the Party on the lines dictated by Indira Congress. It envisaged, a) complete autonomy in all affairs except Foreign Affairs; b) separate flag; c) Sikh representation in the United Nations Organisations; and, d) refraining of the Constitution in accordance with the wishes of the Sikhs. The Congress objective was to distance Jan Sangh from Akalis, and Hindus from Jan Sangh. Since the draft was not in accordance with the Akali policies, Sant Fateh Singh rejected it.

Gurnam Singh and Jagjit Singh Chauhan were mere pawns. The mastermind was Tohra. Under his advice, Gurnam Singh manoeuvred to prevent Akali Dal from having any understanding

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with Jan Sangh or any other group for the Lok Sabha mid-term elections. Akalis fought 12 of 13 seats and lost all but one.[62] Indira was quite pleased.

Encouraged at the Akali debacle, Congress took them by the horns to smash them. Nirlep Kaur, daughter-in-law of S.B. Ranjit Singh, a long-standing Congress Member of Parliament, with the help of toughs from Punjab, and police connivance, took forcible possession of Gurdwara Sis Ganj in Delhi, in May 1971. Delhi High Court obligingly, the following month, ruled against Sant Akali Dal. The long-standing Congress government's desire to control the Sikh Gurdwaras was fulfilled atleast in the capital.[63]

This had its fallout in withdrawal of Congress support to minority Akali government in Punjab. The Akali leadership's efforts to save their government by arranging rapprochement with Jan Sangh was foiied by Tohra group and Gurnam Singh, The latter along with some former Congressites defected from Akali Dal to Congress on eve of mid-June session of the Punjab Assembly. Badal resigned. Instead of induction of Gurnam Singh as Chief Minister, Governor dissolved the Punjab Assembly and imposed President's rule.[64]

Indira now sought to strike decisive blows at any prospects of Akali Dal and Jan Sangh coming together. Dr. Jagjit Singh Chauhan was let loose on international arena to propagate, what he called, Khalistan. Since India by the time was having a war of words with Pakistan over the crisis in East Pakistan and influx of Bengali refugees to India, Chauhan came into contact with foreign governments, and their intelligence set ups too. Pakistanis under President Yahya Khan, looking for a break through, fell into the trap and extended support to Chauhan.

When the Akalis were marshalling their resources to have a brush with Indira Government over its seizure of Delhi Gurdwaras, Chauhan on June 22, 1971, left on foreign tour. Though a General Secretary of Akali Dal, his visit was not sponsored by the Party.

The Akali Dal launched a *morcha*, agitation, on August 15, 1971, to liberate Delhi Gurdwaras. Over the next few months, 20,000 Akali workers were arrested. The agitation was suspended on December 3, on start of open hostilities between India and Pakistan.

Meanwhile, Chauhan on September 18, 1971, in a press interview in London raised demand for Khalistan and stated that a rebel government would be formed with headquarters at Nankana Sahib; if necessary, the Sikhs could fight the Indian army and obtain arms from Pakistan and China. Paradoxically, his pronouncements very well suited both Pakistan and its supporters, and Indira Congress and its cohorts. He also circulated a map of the Sikh state.[65] The *Des Pardesh* of London of September 26,1971, published a verbatim interview with Chauhan.[66] He stated that Pakistani President, Yahya Khan, had agreed to give Vatican status to Nankana Sahib; a government in exile would start functioning from Nankana Sahib after the International Sikh Convention on November 2, the birthday of Guru Nanak; he would himself issue visas and also launch a Sikh International Airline. He, thereafter, referred to economic injustices perpetrated by the Indian Government, viz. non completion of Dam over river Ravi and delay in completion of Pong Dam, poor central investment in industry in Punjab which was at 16 crores (Rs. 160 mn) out of 56,000 crores (Rs. 560,000 mn), etc.

Dr. Chauhan shortly afterwards left for New York to take up the case for independent Sikh land with the United Nations. He inserted half a page advertisement in the *New York Times* of

October 12, 1971, for the Sikh demand for an independent state.[67] This must have cost a lot of money. The following day, he backed up with a demonstration before the United Nations headquarters.

Indira's purport seemed to have been served when Jan Sangh weekly *Current* of October 23 published the news about Dr. Chauhan under the banner headline: "Sant Akali Dal Now Demands a Sovereign Sikh State". This was despite Sant Akali Dal's disowning of Jagjit Singh Chauhan. The *Current* report shrewdly hinted at possible adverse repercussions of Chauhan's pronouncements on fortunes of Sant Akali Dal in the state assembly elections which, it said, "are not far away".

Dr. Chauhan duly arrived at Nankana Sahib in Pakistan on November 2, for Guru Nanak's birthday celebrations. He was ceremoniously presented with the keys of *Gurdwara Janamasthan*, the birthplace of Guru Nanak. He contrasted Government of India's action in taking over the Sikh shrines in Delhi as against that of the Government of Pakistan.

Sant Fateh Singh on November 9, 1971, when still in Delhi jail for liberation of Delhi Gurdwaras from government control, suspended Jagjit Singh Chauhan from the party for his activities abroad which were "against the party's policy as well as the interests of the country and the Panth."[68] The Akalis, as already stated, suspended the agitation on December 3, on start of India-Pak war out of patriotic feelings.

Following the war, the government adopted the Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Bill, but held the elections after a long interval to hand back the Gurdwaras to the representatives of the Sikh community. This long delay also showed mala fide intentions of the government.

Indira's prestige reached new heights following India's victory over Pakistan leading to the creation of sovereign, independent, Bangladesh, and with over 93,000 Pakistani Prisoners-of-War in hand. She sought to encash her popularity, and called for Assembly elections, including that for Punjab in March 1972. Besides, Dr. Chauhan's activities abroad were deliberately projected by the media to form part of Sant Akali Dal's doings. Her purport to scare Hindus away from Jan Sangh which had twice entered into alignment with Akalis had been achieved. The Akalis had no answer to this character assassination campaign by the controlled media.

Indira Congress had an alignment with Communist Party of India and Gurnam Singh faction of Akali Dal. It won 66 of 89 seats contested, securing 42.84 percent votes. Its ally, Communist Party of India won 10 seats. Sant Akalis got 24 seats with 27.7 per cent votes, and Communist Party (Marxist) 1 seat with 3.3 per cent votes. Jan Sangh which polled 5 percent votes drew a blank.[69]

In the post election analysis, Harish Bhanot, Correspondent of the *Hindustan Times* attributed Indira Congress's victory to two factors. One was the help extended by CPI which according to him "spearheaded Congress political campaign", and two, the "Hindus tilted the balance in Punjab". The Hindus were determined not to let Akalis come into power themselves or in alignment with other political parties. They, therefore, voted for Congress(I) and its allies.[70]

Giani Zail Singh was inducted as Chief Minister of Punjab on March 17, 1972. With him started the new era of Congress efforts to break the hegemony of Akalis in Sikh politics.

Tohra, taking advantage of Akalis defeat, asked for Sant Fateh Singh's retirement. The Sant did not disappoint him. He stepped aside from Presidentship which devolved on Jathedar Mohan Singh Tur. The Akali Dal, however, at its annual session in August 1972, named Sant Fateh Singh as Patron, and asked him to name the new executive. Again, Mohan Singh Tur was named President. Later, in the SGPC elections Sant Chanan Singh, close to Sant Fateh Singh was re-elected President.

Sant Fateh Singh died of heart failure on October 30, 1972, and Sant Chanan Singh followed suit in another month. This void put the Akali politics in doledrums.[71]

Tohra, a pastmastar in effecting alliances, with his solid support of leftist infiltrators was now angling to take over Presidentship of the SGPC.[72] He entered into new understanding with unsuspecting Badal, brought about the merger of breakaway Akali Dais to strengthen his hands. This enabled him to seize Presidentship of the SGPC on January 6, 1973. That, he has been able to keep control for over two decades without his active links with Communists being questioned, reflects the bad days to which the Akali leadership has fallen.

Tohra straightway under advice of Marxist leader Harkishan Singh Surjeet, and also Giani Zail Singh (from whose Faridkot district many Naxalites came) started bringing in former Naxalites in employment in various Gurdwaras. This accelerated the downhill journey of the Sikhs in socio-religious sphere.

As against that, Giani Zail Singh unintentionally gave spurt to the Sikh revivalism. He virtually ran away with Akalis clothes. His project to build 400 km long zig zag Guru Gobind Singh Marg (highway linking Anandpur Sahib in the north to Damdama Sahib in the south),[73] with erection of pillars with inscriptions from Guru Gobind Singh's utterances at 20 historical places on the way, caused a great deal of enthusiasm among the people.[74] Akalis stole the show by putting the SGPC van in front of the inaugural *mahanyatra*, great pilgrimage, which commenced at Anandpur Sahib on April 10, and ended at Damdama Sahib on April 13, 1973. The securing of Guru Gobind Singh's weapons from London and their display at various places in Punjab, besides taking out special processions on the occasion was another factor. Giani Zail Singh also organised *Kirtan Darbars* all over the state, named various hospitals after the Gurus, and founded Sahibzada Ajit Singh Nagar at the outskirts of Chandigarh.[75]

The centenary celebrations of founding of Singh Sabha movement starting 1973, the founding of Kendri Sri Guru Singh Sabha under presidentship of Hukam Singh to carry on the work of *dharam prachar*, religious preachings, on continuous basis, and the tricentenary celebrations of martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur in 1975 helped to rejuvenate the community. The Kendri Sri Guru Singh Sabha organised discussions, lectures, seminars on an ongoing basis. These and other activities helped to bring about resurgence and renaissance of traditional Sikh values.

The greening of Punjab farms and concentration of small scale industries made the Sikhs all the more conscious of the state having been starved of heavy industry.[76] Then, there was the war of words between Zail Singh and his overlord Indira Gandhi on the one had, and the Sikhs who accused the Congress leadership of ingratitude and betrayals on the other. The disclosures in February 1973 by Niranjan Singh Talib, President Punjab Congress, of Tarlochan Singh Riyasti having been "paid and bribed" with the blessings of Indira Gandhi to bring down the Akali ministry in 1971, "substantiated the gravest misgivings of those who cherish democracy in this country."[77] On top of it, came news about the centre's intentions about splitting up the SGPC into several

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boards to break the Sikh power and ride roughshod over the Sikh community. The refusal of Haryana Chief Minister, Bansi Lal, to hold the SGPC elections was seen as part of a widespread conspiracy.[78]

Giani Zail Singh's efforts to ingratiate Arya Samajists on Hindi in Schools indicated that Congress(I) was not willing to give Punjabi the same status as given, say, to Bengali in Bengal, Marathi in Maharashtra. The Sikhs were not amused.

The growth of Sikh consciousness and the feelings of infidelity of the Hindus towards the Sikhs went hand in hand. In July 1973, the Master Akali Dal headed by Kapur Singh decided to launch a new movement for a 'Sikh Homeland within the Indian Union' from August 15, 1973. The *Spokesman* weekly of July 16, observed that "The Sikh Homeland idea is catching up. Mere condemnation or denunciation would not solve the problem. . . disappointment among Sikh masses is rapidly increasing." Bhai Sahib Ardaman Singh of Bagarian observed in the *Spokesman* weekly of mid-August 1973 that the "Sikhs feel grieved in free India". He analysed and placed the Sikhs in the Congress into three categories. Firstly, there were few devoted Sikhs who were "much better Sikhs than many of us", but were inhibited by Congress masters whom they could not displease. Secondly, there were opportunists who were interested only in their own self and their positions of profit and vantage. "Thirdly, there are those who are afraid that any rapprochement and understanding between their gods at the Centre and the Sikh Panth will sweep them out into dustbins. They are interested only in keeping the bad blood boiling. It will be futile to pin any hope on these people."[79]

As a matter of fact, the persons enumerated by Bhai Ardaman Singh in first category also fell in the third category, as the situation demanded. Also, the Congress leadership encouraged the last group of people who were willing to do maximum damage to the Sikhs in return for loaves and fishes of offices, and other crums.

The counterpulls to which the Sikhs were subjected found expression at the Annual Conference of Akali Dal on October 16-17, 1973, at Anandpur Sahib which adopted the famous resolution. It was drafted by Kapur Singh who had earlier authored the resolution adopted by Hari Singh Nalwa Conference in May 1965, which had demanded 'a self-determined political status within the Union of India'.[80] Anandpur Sahib Resolution now adopted was more detailed and all comprehensive. Kapur Singh proceeded with the assumption that the Sikhs were the chosen people.

Anandpur Sahib Resolution has come to acquire the status of Magna Carta for the Sikhs. It spells out the political, religious, social, cultural, and economic interests of the Sikhs. To the Hindus, who are allergic to Khalsa's concept of *charhdi kala*, loftiness of spirit, the concept of Sikh Panth's independent entity is secessionist, and subversive of national objectives laid down by Gandhi to merge the entity of the Sikhs within the broad ocean of Hindudom. Hence it was acclaimed as treasonous.

The resolution, however, went unnoticed and was adopted without any discussion in much the same way as were the resolutions adopted by the Indian National Congress till 1920. It was reflective of the deep feelings of some sections of leadership over the malady that afflicted the community and the remedy that suggested itself as a way out.

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It was in this vein that the *Spokesman* weekly of December 3, 1973, covering the martyrdom anniversary of Guru Tegh Bahadur captioned the main story, "Hindus Turn Ungrateful to Guru Tegh Bahadur's Supreme Sacrifice of Life; Sikh Sacrifices and Help Paid Back with Treachery, Deceit and Stab-in-the Back." In the main news story it said that "We cannot resist the urge to grieve over the present day anti-Sikh policies of Hindus" and that, "Now a days the Hindus are thirsty of Sikh Blood and would love to bury the Sikhs fathoms deep beyond any hope of resurrection. To achieve these nefarious designs, they consider no means too mean or too foul." Further that, "Long used to political hegemony, economic overlordship and false notions of social superiority, they seek to drown every one who tries to challenge them or had the potential of becoming a rival to them in any field. "It went on to add, "Scratch any Hindu and behind his skin you will find an anti-Sikh maniac who is sneaking his lips to finish off the Sikhs."

Such feelings got aggravated in the next year and a half till Indira Gandhi went berserk and imposed internal emergency to save her dynastic, Sikh-baiting, Brahminical rule. This constituted perversity of the Indian Constitution.

The Sikhs with traditions of defiance of autocratic, dictatorial, rulers were naturally destined to be the worst sufferers of this maniac-depressive Indira's emergency regime, which changed for the Sikhs the course of their history and their place in the Indian set up.

Footnotes:

1. It was generally believed that had Nehru been alive. Justice Das would have exonerated Kairon.
2. On May 22, 1964, the police entered Gurdwara Paonta Sahib in Himachal Pradesh with shoes on and cigarettes in their pockets in utter disregard of Sikh traditions and sacred injunctions. The police also opened fire killing many Nihangs congregating inside the Gurdwara. The doors and windows of the shrine were smashed and the man reciting *Akhand* Path was also killed.
3. Ajit Singh Sarhadi, *Punjabi Suba*, The Story of Struggle (Delhi, 19.70), p. 399.
4. Ibid, p. 400.
5. Both Tohra and Balwant Singh played a prominent part in the Akali Dal and continued to serve as Trojan horses for their respective parties. For instance, Tohra has throughout kept in close touch with Harkishan Singh Surjeet, the evil genius of the Communist Party of India(Marxist) in guiding the course of Sikh politics. Balwant Singh till his very last, protected the Congress interests. For instance, when Akalis came into power following the emergency excesses in 1977, he did not permit severe action being taken against any of the civil servants who had served as Sanjay's cronies. They were only given unimportant posts. All this while, Akalis were arrested a number of times on various issues by different Congress governments, but Balwant Singh was not even once taken into custody. The understanding was mutual.
6. Gurmit Singh, *History of Sikh Struggles*, (Delhi, 1983), Vol 1. p. 157.
7. Sarhadi. n. 3, pp. 400-01.
8. Emphasis added. Harbans Singh, *The Heritage of the Sikhs*, (Delhi, 1983), pp. 369-70; Also, Sarhadi, n. 3, pp. 401-02.
9. Gurmit Singh, n. 6, p. 160.
10. For text, Ibid, pp. 161-63; Sarhadi, n. 3, p. 403.
11. For text, see Gurmit Singh, n. 6, pp. 163-65. Khushwant Singh later went over to the other side and was amply rewarded.

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12. "Shastri-Fateh Singh Dialogue on Punjabi Suba", The *Sikh Review* Calcutta, December 1965; also reproduced in Ibid, pp. 396-419.
13. Ibid.
14. Sarhadi, n. 3, p. 409.
15. Ibid, p. 414. Dr. S. Gopal in the biography of his rather. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan has played down his role, probably to ingratiate himself with Nehru-descendants still holding the levers of power in India.
16. Hukam Singh, "Betrayal of the Sikhs" in *Hindu-Sikh Conflict: Causes and Cure;* (London, 1983), pp. 21-22. Also in Gurmit Singh, n. 6, appendix 43, pp. 427-32.
17. Sarhadi, n. 3, p. 418.
18. Ibid, p. 420.
19. Ibid.
20. Hukam Singh, n. 16, pp. 21-22.
21. Sarhadi, n. 3, p. 423.
22. Precisely, it recommended the present state of Punjab being reorganised on linguistic basis and the Punjabi region specified in the First Schedule to Punjab Regional Committee Order, 1957, to form an unilingual Punjabi speaking state.
23. Krishna Huthee Singh, Jawaharlal Nehru's sister, not knowing Indira's game plan wrote, "I am sure Indira was overruled." Reflecting Gangu Brahminical heritage, she went on to add, "If it were upto me I'd... send a firing squad to hasten them to Sainthood" *We Nehru's*, p. 360, quoted in Gurmit Singh in *The Spokesman* Weekly, February 25, 1973.
24. In the words of Khushwant Singh, In her dealings with the Punjab or the Sikhs, Mrs. Gandhi practised a kind of duplicity "more becoming of a smalltime politician than a far sighted statesman". In her memoirs *My Truth*, Indira confirms her duplicity which she justified in the interest of retaining Hindu support. Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs*, (Delhi, 1991), Vol 2, pp. 304-05.
25. *The Tribune*, March 10, 1966, quoted in Sarhadi, n. 3, p. 430.
26. Craig Baxter, *The Jan Sangh. A Biography of an Indian Political Party*, (Philadelphia, 1969), p. 255.
27. Ibid, p. 256.
28. Sarhadi, n. 3, p. 438.
29. "Punjab Boundary Commission Report" in Gurmit Singh, n. 6, Doc. 46, p. 447.
30. Ibid, p. 454.
31. Punjab had a population of 115.84 lakhs (11.584 mn) of whom over 60 percent actually, and not 50 percent as per false and fictitious census of 1961, were Sikhs. The reorganised Punjab had over 80 percent of the Sikh population in India. The next biggest concentration of the Sikhs was in Delhi.
32. Satya M. Rai, *Punjab Since Partition*, (Delhi 1986 edn), p. 312.
33. Gurmit Singh, n. 6, pp. 175-76.
34. Ibid, p. 442.
35. Ibid, p.435.
36. He was preaching Sikhism and carrying on *amrit prachar administering* baptism) and reclaimed back to the fold of the Khalsa some of those managing Sikh shrines in London.
37. Sarhadi, n. 3, p. 453-54.
38. Ibid, p. 455.
39. Hukam Singh was shortly afterwards rewarded with appointment as Governor of Rajasthan.
40. Baldev Raj Nayar, *Minority Politics in Punjab*, (Princeton, 1966). Nayar had failed to foresee that Punjabi Suba was on the anvil and referred to the Sikhs as a minority whose politics he discussed. The Sikhs actually were over 60 percent in the Punjab. The Hindus, after excluding

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Scheduled Castes, were barely 15 percent. Of them, the real miscreants, namely Arya Samajists were hardly 5 percent. On seeing the title, the author in 1966 thought that Nayar was writing about the political antics of these hard core fanatics. To his great disappointment, he found that Nayar was discussing the politics of over 60 percent majority, which he erroneously termed minority.

41. Ibid, p. 139.
42. Ibid, pp. 138-41.
43. Dhillon as Speaker of the Assembly was the right hand man of Kairon and throughout the period had blinkers over his eyes. In early 1963, the author spent a week with his Ph.D. guide, Dr. Hari Ram Gupta, then pro-Vice Chancellor of the Punjab University. In the room on the opposite side of the corridor. Vice Chancellor, A.C. Joshi, was conducting interviews for teaching appointments to the University Colleges in Jalandar and Rohtak. These went on for a week and the author found that not a single Sikh candidate appeared for interview. Dhilion as Speaker was also sitting on the interview Board. The author asked Dr. Gupta the reasons for Sikhs not figuring in the interviews. Dr. Gupta said that Dr. Joshi was a rabid Arya Samajist and he eliminated the Sikh candidates at the preliminary stage. He also said that in the whole of the Punjab University, the number of the Sikhs appointed to the teaching posts could be counted on the fingertips of one hand. Dhillon never bothered about the blatant discrimination to which the Sikhs were being subjected.
44. Swaran Singh during his entire ministerial career did not help a single Sikh (including his brother in the Railways), except a Sikh lady, and that too for extraneous reasons! Rather he was cause of retarding their service prospects.

    For instance, in 1965-66, over a period of a year, one Mr. X was superceded four times for ad hoc promotion to Senior Class I Grade I level, and Swaran Singh as Minister approved the promotions. When the papers superceding Mr. X by the author went up to him, Swaran Singh got rather disturbed: how could a turbaned Sikh supercede a caste Hindu? He raised certain objections. The administration pointed out that the post to which the author was being promoted was highly specialised, relating to Pakistan, and knowledge of Urdu was essential. Also, another post was coming up in another two months to which Mr. X could be accommodated. The author's promotion was approved. A couple of months later, Mr. X was also promoted. Thereafter Mr. X speaking to the author stated that it was his (authors) promotion that made Swaran Singh to wake up to the injustice that was being done to him.
45. Musafir committed faux paus as a *satyagrahi* during the civil disobedience movement and was later taken by Gandhi to Wardha where he was subjected to complete brain washing, that he virtually became a robot.
46. Darbara Singh was the only Sikh politician who did not have an apprenticeship with Akali Dal. So far as Sikhs are concerned, he was simply an unregenerate man.
47. One may recall Giani Kartar Singh's act as Revenue Minister in mid-1950s, when talks for formation of linguistic zones were going on. He transferred the village of Kandu Khera from Ferozepur to Bhatinda District to break the contiguity of Hindu-dominated Hissar district with Hindu-dominated Abohar and Fazilka tehsils of Ferozepur district. It was this farsighted act, of breaking the link between two Hindu dominated areas, that saved the cotton rich areas of Fazilka from being awarded to Haryana by the Shah Commission in 1966 itself. It was not for nothing that he was called the brain of the Akali Party.
48. Harbans Singh, n. 8, p. 375.
49. For text, see, Sarhadi, n. 3, pp. 463-64.
50. Coincidentally, the same day master Tara Singh died.
51. K. C. Gulati, *Akalis Past and Present*, (Delhi, 1974), p. 186.

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52. Sarhadi, n. 3, p. 466.
53. Ibid, pp. 467-68.
54. Inder Malhotra, *Indira Gandhi*, *A Personal and Political Biography*, (London, 1989), p. 122.
55. For text, see Sarhadi, n. 3, p. 475.
56. Ibid, pp. 477-78. The Commission for adjustment of areas was never appointed.
57. Ibid, p. 481.
58. Gulati, n. 51, p. 190.
59. Khushwant Singh, n. 24, Vol II, p. 315.
60. Nayar, n. 40, p. 167.
61. Dr. Jagjit Singh Chauhan had a colourful career. A private medical practitioner of Tanda, Hoshiarpur District, he was elected to the Punjab Assembly in 1967 on Republican Party of India ticket. In the United Front Ministry, he was inducted as Deputy Speaker. He withdrew support from the United Front Ministry of Gurnam Singh on November 22, 1967, and joined the Janta Party formed by breakway Lachhman Singh Gill. In the 1969 Punjab Assembly elections, he lost security deposit. He became President of Janta Party when Gill died in April 1969.

    Chauhan played a major role in Darshan Singh Pheruman's fast unto-death over Chandigarh, leading to his death in October 1969.

    When Kapur Singh and Gian Singh Rarewala floated the Panj Kaunsli, Chauhan merged his Janta Party. He was a strong critic of Sant Fateh Singh and asserted on June 18, 1970, that only the formation of a Sikh Homeland could deliver the goods to the Sikhs. By the time, he had come under the influence "of Indira Congress leaders and was playing into their hands. He became Vice President, when Panj Kaunsli was renamed Shiromani Akali Dal (Pheruman) on August 25, 1970.
62. Gulati, n. 51, p. 192.
63. Ibid, p. 193.
64. Ibid. Gurnam Singh was later rewarded with appointment as High Commissioner to Australia, but died shortly afterwards in an air crash.
65. The *Hind Samachar*, Jalandhar on September 21, splashed Chauhan's statement published in *Partap* of London of September 19, 1971.
66. He was interviewed by the editor of the paper.
67. Sant Fateh Singh was at the time being held in Delhi jail in connection with the agitation for liberation of Delhi Gurdwaras.
68. *The Patriot*. November 10, 1971.
69. Paul R. Brass, *Language*, *Religion and Politics in Northern India*, (Cambridge, 1974), pp. 371-72.
70. Harish Bhanot in the *Hindustan Times*, March 15, 1972.
71. See, Bhai Hari Singh Shergill for a detailed analysis of the Sikh situation in the post-Sant period. The *Spokesman* Weekly, December 25, 1972.
72. The *Spokesman* Weekly, December 25, 1972.
73. Much of the highway was already in existence.
74. The *Spokesman* Weekly, April 23, 1973.
75. Khushwant Singh, n. 24, vol II, p. 327.
76. The *Spokesman* Weekly, April 23, 1973.
77. Ibid. April 30, 1973.
78. Ibid. May 7, and June 11, 1973.
79. Ibid, Anniversary Number 1973, p. 21
80. See n. 8 ante.

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BOOK FIVE

THE SIKHS IN INDEPENDENT INDIA-II
FACING GENOCIDE

9
Indira's Sikh War
(1975 - 1984)

The declaration of the state of emergency by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi on the night of June 25-26, 1975, to save herself from the aftereffects of Allahabad High Court Judgement unseating her for her corrupt practices, as laid down by herself, shook the very foundations of the democratic spirit underlying the Constitution. Armed with the draconian powers including rigorous press censorship, it ushered an era of arbitrariness and arrogance for personal survival and family aggrandisement, with new upstart Sanjay Gandhi and his goons creating terror and playing havoc with the system. Precisely, M.C. Kamatr, in the Constituent Assembly (CA), had warned against such a type of subversion of the constitution by the people in authority. Shiromani Akali Dal, the premier Sikh organisation, in 1950, had mentioned of the dictatorial powers that could be assumed under the emergency provisions as one of the reasons for its rejection of the Constitution as adopted by the CA.

Paradoxically, the emergency was within the framework of the Constitution; Supreme Court having knuckled under, with the vacation Judge, a self-serving leftist, wilfully passing an utterly confusing and mutually contradictory order granting her partial stay of the Allahabad High Court Judgement. Verily, this was upshot of Indira's resolve to have committed Judges. Now, she went wholehog to bend the judiciary by capricious transfer of Judges, suppressions, and by weighted new appointments.

In shock and disbelief, timid and supine nation almost capitulated. There were individual cases of protest, especially by the students of Delhi University for a couple of months, and an obituary notice in the Time of India, "death of Mrs. Democracy, wife of Mr. Freedom", but by and large the people in hushed tones took it casually. No political party except Shiromani Akali Dal took up the challenge; the only other exception was the Rashtriya Swym Sevak Sangh (RSS) whose Chief Balasaheb Deoras, while still in Jail pleaded for a compromise, and the RSS periodicals started praising Indira and her son Sanjiy. According to the Amnesty International, 140,000 persons were detained without trial during the emergency,[1] and of them 60,000 were Sikhs. Akali volunteers were so motivated that when released they would restart with anti-emergency slogans passing through villages, creating a piquant situation.

When the whole of India lay prostrate before Indira and her son Sanjay, the anti-emergency agitation from the Golden Temple complex, with volunteers offering prayers at Akal Takht before offering themselves for arrest, was taken as a serious and personal affront by Indira. This was aggravated by the failure of her emissaries, Amarinder Singh and Bhai Ashok Singh of Bagrian to strike a deal, including formation of a coalition government in Punjab, with Akalis,[2] who would not compromise with pretensions of almighty absolutism.[3] Indira got into her head that it were only the Sikhs who constituted a threat to her imperious and dynastic rule, and decided to inflict blows from which they take long, if at all, to recover. She also took the decision at the time to push them out of

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the national mainstream, which was the undercurrent of the whole Nehruvian era, to prevent them from playing such a role of upholders of the rule of law henceforth.

To begin with, the Maintenance of International Security Act (MISA) was extended to all top Akali leaders while still in gaol for defying the ban orders. The MISA was amended third time in October 1975 to forbid disclosure of grounds of detention, or the ground information on which these were based.

She followed up with two punitive measures to inflict permanent injury to the Sikh economic interests. Firstly, she came up with a bitchy Award on March 25, 1976, allocating the waters and hydel power of the Punjab rivers, under section 78 of the Punjab Reorganisation Act of 1966 to Rajasthan, Haryana, Delhi and Punjab. The Central Government under this section had retained arbitrary powers to allocate waters of the Beas project. Indira now used the discretion with malice aforethought and vengeance to award over 75 percent of waters to neighbouring non-riparian states and create in them vested interest to the detriment of legal rights of Punjab.[4] This was grossly destructive of the Punjab economy and was intended to cause ruination of the Sikh peasantry, the mainstay of the Akali Dal. The loss in agricultural produce to Punjab and gain to non-riparian states was estimated at Rs. 2500 crores (Rs. 25 billion) per annum, apart from considerable loss on account of transfer of hydel power.[5] The loyalist Punjab Chief Minister, Giani Zail Singh, who protested at this unjust treatment to Punjab interests, was brusquely told to shut up, while the Akali protests against this Award, not warranted by national or international norms, went unheeded.

Secondly, the Defence Ministry for the first time issued orders for recruitment to the armed forces based on quotas to provinces on the basis of population. This was designed to reduce the intake and content of the Sikhs in the armed forces to just two percent.

Verily, the Sikhs were asked to pay a very high price for their uprightness and standing up to the dictatorial pretensions of Indira Gandhi. The worst part of it was that the Hindus of all denominations while appreciating the Sikh's tenacity to stand up to the Emergency excesses, were not in favour of undoing of Indira's vindictive fiats against the Sikhs.

The Congress, for the first time, was swept out of power by the grand opposition alliance in March 1977 elections to Lok Sabha. In Punjab, Akali-Janta combination won all the 13 seats. The opposition parties won 91 (Akalis 58, Janta Party 24 and Communists 9) out of 117 seats in the Punjab Assembly in June 1977. The apparent Hindu-Sikh modus vivendi, to Indira seemed failure of Congress strategy of creating controlled distrust between the two communities. Akalis formed a coalition government in Punjab with Janta party, and for the first time joined the government at the Centre. But this did not mean the end of Sikh woes, or that they now had the *sunwai*, patient hearing to undo the wrongs done to them by the previous government.

The new Prime Minister Morarji Desai, an ultra Gandhiite had opposed the formation of Punjabi Suba till the very last, and was fully imbued with anti-Sikh spirit. For instance, when the Minorities Commission was set up in 1978, Morarji Desai, as also Chaudhary Charan Singh, wanted to exclude the Sikhs from within its purview as, they contended, the Sikhs were not any different from the Hindus.[6] Parkash Singh Badal, Punjab Chief Minister, not unexpectedly, failed to get Indira's Water Hydel Power Award of March 1976 modified by Morarji Desai on the specious plea of lack of consensus of other parties involved (as if there was a consensus when the Award was originally made), and left it to the parties concerned to make a reference to the Supreme Court.

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That was duly made under section 162 of the Constitution. Nobody wanted to go into the background in which Indira's punitive award was made, and undo the wrong to Punjab as part of emergency excesses. Akalis should have pulled out of the central government on the issue as part of undoing of emergency wrongs, which they failed to do. At least, the Supreme Court could have been made to hear the parties on day to day basis, and give its judgement within a stipulated period.

By the time, when Morarji Desai was contending that the Sikhs were Hindus, Indira Gandhi initiated certain moves to push the Sikhs out of the national mainstream, with a view to eventually create conditions in which they could be exterminated, *a la* Buddhism, from the land of their birth. She was quite sure of that. She removed all references to the Golden Temple, Amritsar, and also possibly deleted any references to the Sikhs from her book *Eternal India* published in French (in Switzerland) in 1978. The map of India published in the volume showing, inter alia, Amritsar betrayed the contours of her original draft.[7] Sikhism in her estimation was not a permanent fixture in India, was a passing phase, and had no place in her *eternal* India.

Indira took three steps to achieve her objectives. One, accepting Giani Zail Singh's advice, she sought to bring to the fore a Sikh savant, a holyman, to contain the Akalis and erode their position in the Sikh community; two, she used the breakaway, heretical, Sant Nirankaris, who had been patronised by various Congress governments since the time of Sardar Patel including herself, to cause an armed conflict, to add new dimensions to Punjab problem; and last, but not the least, she decided to reactivate the dormant Naxalites in Punjab, with Sikh scriptures and slogan of Khalistan on their lips and their hand on the hilt, to cause dissensions between the Hindus and the Sikhs, and otherwise serve as destabilising agents to create controlled violence. The interaction of various processes could produce an explosive situation to marginalise the Akali leadership and help achieve other wider objectives.

Indira's objectives in coopting a Sikh savant to outsmart the Akalis were more sinister than simply embarrassing the Akali leadership. Giani Zail Singh and Darbara Singh who were entrusted to do the preliminary selection, chose two of them and left it to Sanjay to do the final selection. Kamal Nath, M.P. and Sanjay's friend told Kuldip Nayar that one did not look a 'courageous type' and that Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale looked bold enough and was selected.[8]

Giani Zail Singh's objective, inter alia, was Gurdwara politics. Sant Bhindranwale had become head of Damdami Taksal, which traced its origins to Baba Deep Singh,[9] only a year back. He was Carrying on a militant campaign to "cleanse the Sikhs of impurities which had entered their hearts and was manifest in their actions."[10] He apparently welcomed the patronage of Indira Congress through Giani Zail Singh and others, as a welcome opportunity to act on a wider canvass.

There was least doubt about the missionary zeal of Sant Bhindranwale who was carrying on his campaign, '*nashe chado, amrit chako, Singh sajo*'- discard intoxicants, take baptism, and become practicing Sikhs - and was warning his people against the evil tendencies of trimming of beard, cutting hair, taking to drinking and drugs - deeper social and religious issues - that had been neglected by the Akalis long in power in the SGPC. Bhindranwale was a religious fundamentalist in the sense he earnestly believed in fundamentals of Sikhism. Sanjay Gandhi and Zail Singh, however, needed a religio-political issue to cause a confrontation between Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale and the Akali Party and the Government. This, they found in obliging Sant "Nirankaris a schismatic and heretical sect. Already, Bhindranwale was being provoked by senior Sant Nirankari officials in the Punjab administration who were harassing him."

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Sant Nirankari Chief, Baba Gurbachan Singh's holding a special Diwan on the auspicious occasion of Baisakhi, April 13, 1978, at Amritsar, holy city of the Sikhs, with permission of Badal government under pressure of Morarji Desai, was sinister. The customary protest by devout Sikhs against his unwholesome references to the Sikh Gurus and the Sikh scriptures, the presence of Lala Jagat Narain (the prominent Congress leader who had done nothing but emit venom throughout his life at first against the Muslims and later against the Sikhs) who provided the stiffener to the Sant Nirankari Chief, and the Sant Nirankari's use of fire arms which led to the murder of 18 people - 13 devout Sikhs, 3 Nirankaris and 2 passersby -were all premeditated.[11]

The devout Sikh protestors were from the Akhand Kirtni Jatha of late Bhai Randhir Singh of Narangwal,[12] and the Damdami Taksal.

The pre-planned Sant Nirankari firing caused deep resentment in the Sikh community. It provided an instant issue for Sant Bhindranwale to seize and confront the Akalis. This caused glee in Indira circles and made Sanjay and his cronies, apart from Zail Singh and the Punjab Congressites, to whip up anti-Nirankari agitation.

On the other hand, mischievous Hindus of various denominations including some of the former Jan Sangh elements, now forming part of the Janta Party and sharing power in Punjab, and various elements in power at the Centre, marshalled their support in favour of the heretic Sant Nirankari's right to freedom of worship, or freedom to vilify Sikhism, which was at the receiving end. There was also failure of intelligence agencies as Janta Party government never came to know of Indira Congress's machinations. The Akalis were in a dilemma so long they were in power, and failed to adequately deal with the emergent situation in Punjab.

The partisan attitude of the Centre including that of national, read caste-Hindu, press contributed to intensification of Sikh hostility to Sant Nirankaris, a situation in which petulant violence against Sant Nirankaris could be seen to be justified. Bibi Amarjit Kaur wife of Fauja Singh, Inspector in Punjab Agricultural Department, one of the devouts killed in the Baisakhi clash, who was critical of, what she termed, Sant Bhindranwale's pusillanimity, entrenched herself in the Golden Temple complex. She caused the emergence of Babbar Khalsa, its militant wing.[13] She got full cooperation from another lady, Bibi Harsharan Kaur, who shared her woes. Thus, a nascent force to uphold the best traditions of the Khalsa, not foreseen by Indira Gandhi, came into being and added another dimension to conflict-management in the Punjab.

Side by side, on the same Baisakhi, April 13, 1978, was enacted another dram a, the reactivation of the dormant Naxalites at a meeting at Aroma Hotel, Chandigarh - the hotel bill of Rs. 600 being paid by Giani Zail Singh.[14] Indira had used both Giani Zail Singh and Prof. V. N. Tiwari of Chandigarh who later was nominated to Rajya Sabha.[15] Giani Zail Singh used his knowledge of the Sikh history to give the group the name of Dal Khalsa. Khalsa Dal had been established in 1734 under Nawab Kapur Singh to consolidate the Sikh power; and now an organisation with corresponding nomenclature was being set up to liquidate the Sikh Panth! Indira's objectives were quite different than those given later by Giani Zail Singh in his interview with Hindi Weekly, *Dinman*, when he stated, "I did organise Dal Khalsa. My objective was to participate in Sikh Gurdwara politics. The Gurdwaras are after all not the monopoly of Akalis."[16] In candid moments he stated that he did so, as he was told by his leader, Indira Gandhi, whom he followed blindly.

The two declared objectives of Dal Khalsa on April 13, 1978, were the formation of Khalistan, an independent sovereign Sikh state, and ordering of lives of the Sikhs according to tenets of the Khalsa. Giani Zail Singh later indicated that he had gathered eight to ten former Naxalites for formation of Dal Khalsa.[17] The Naxalities, it may be mentioned, belonged to Charu Majumdar faction. After being badly mauled in 1971 police encounters, they had settled down as granthis in various village and town Gurdwaras, with the help of Gurcharan Singh Tohra. After taking over as President of SGPC, Tohra acted in close collaboration with CPM leader Harkishan Singh Surjeet in infiltration of Marxists as well into the Gurdwara administration.[18] Some of these Naxalites had also joined the police and para military forces with the connivance of Giani Zail Singh, Chief Minister.

The Naxalites did not believe in international borders and indulged in insensate killing to create terror. Now, with sacred hymns on their lips and their hands on the hilt, as subsequently came out, mostly Chinese made arms of Bangladesh war vintage which they unearthed, they resumed their armed activity under Congress(I) patronage. Despite their strings to Moscow which brought them closer to CPM, the Naxalite Dal Khalsa got intertwined with Dr. Jagjit Singh Chauhan, who had for long acted as a stooge of Congress(I) and fathered disruptionist movements, as suited his mentors.

Presently, Harsimaran Singh, Stenographer of Prof. V.N. Tiwari, who had a shortwhile earlier written a book on Khalistan, was inducted as *Mukh Panch*, or President. Other *Panchas*, members of the executive, of the five member council were: Jaswant Singh Thekedar of Gurdaspur, Gajinder Singh, Satnam Singh of Chandigarh, and 80 year old Giani Harbhagat Singh of Narangwal, Ludhiana. The group was financed by "Punjab Congress leaders."[19] Later, Dal Khalsa set up branches in U.K. in January 1983 and in West Germany in June 1983.[20]

As to the character of Dal Khalsa, the *White Paper* issued by the Government of India in July 1984 rightly observed that,

> It appears to have been based on the ideas of late Giani Bakhshish Singh, a pro-Naxalite leader of Birmingham. The Dal Khalsa advocates use of violence to achieve its objectives. According to it, 'only terror will help us to achieve our target'. . . . Political power is not served to anybody on a platter; nor can it be acquired through 'Bhakti'; without a guerrilla warfare and without an armed revolt it would be impossible to achieve our aims.'… Political power flows out of the barrel of a gun. An armed battle is the only way of achieving Khalistan."[21]

Verily, Indira Gandhi by reactivating Naxalites and giving them the slogan of Khalistan was unbottling the genie, not simply for the sake of personal power which could be the immediate gain, but with wider designs. It may be seen that the objectives of Indira Gandhi, Zail Singh and the Naxalites in the formation of Dal Khalsa, as also those of Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale in accepting Congress(I) patronage were at cross purposes and incompatible. These suited Indira very well.

By mid-1978, various components were in their places, and Indira's plan was fully operative. Sant Nirankari-Sikh clash had activated Hindu chauvinism which came out in defence of Sant Nirankaris all over northern India. The former Jan Sangh is like Harbans Lal Khanna at Amritsar were openly taking cudgels on behalf of Sant Nirankaris, and the communal Jalandhar press was livid with its venom. The die-hard elements, soaked in Congress culture, headed by Premier Morarji

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Desai, by their cynical attitude, sought to aggravate the situation. The Akalis were on the defensive and under pressure both from Jan Sangh elements in the Punjab coalition government, and from the Centre which upheld the Sant Nirankari position.

Bhindranwale's religious sermons were laced with references to "the unSikh Sikhs dominating the Akali Dal and SGPC". He was bitterly critical of Badal.[22] In this light, Bhindranwale saw nothing reprehensible in getting succour from Indira Congress which, however, was hunting with the hounds and running with the hare. The Akalis had the experience of running the Punjab government with Jan Sangh and had realised how hard it was. To them, embracing the Jan Sangh was embracing a scorpion and lesser evil, while embracing Congress was embracing a poisonous Cobra. Bhindranwale was yet to learn the lesson the hard way.

Indira met Sant Bhindranwale, Jathedar Santokh Singh of Delhi now toeing her line, and others on May 14,1978, outside her residence during the massive Sikh protest march against the Sant Nirankari's massacre at Amritsar, redirected from the truant Prime Minister Desai' s house to *Rashtrapati Bhavan*, President's house.[23] The Indira Congressites at various places carried demonstrations against Sant Nirankaris and showed earnestness of their anti-Sant Nirankari stance. For instance, Youth Congress(I) leader, Kanwaljit Singh Gill, headed the massive Sikh protest march against Baba Gurbachan Singh then holding congregation at Kanpur in September. This resulted in police opening fire leaving 12 killed and 80 injured.[24] The Kanpur episode further embittered the Sikh feelings and caused chain reaction, including the one on November 5, 1978, at Gurdwara Bangla Sahib, Delhi, when the Sikh protestors were subjected to teargas and police firing, leaving three, including Jathedar Avtar Singh Kohli, President of Akali Dal, dead and many injured.[25] Meanwhile in June 1978, the Sikh-Sant Nirankari relations had reached a new denoument with Sant Nirankaris being ostracised from the Sikh Panth by a *Hukamnamah*, Ordinance, issued by the Jathedar of Akal Takht.

Dal Khalsa consisting of non-entities started getting prominent coverage in the media, thanks to the assistance of Giani Zail Singh. He started ringing up various newspaper editors and correspondents to give their statements and activities coverage on the front page.[26] Dal Khalsa also activated the dormant Naxalites throughout the state. They were helped by Giani Zail Singh in getting arms licences, often in fictitious names. Dal Khalsa also joined in strength the All India Sikh Students Federation (AISSF) recently activated with Bhai Amrik Singh's taking over as President. It captured some leading positions. The Naxalite operations during this period of mid-1978 to mid-1980 when Congress came into power in Punjab, were mostly confined to hospitable Faridkot area.[27] Even the hit squad against Sant Nirankaris in revenge against the killing of her husband, raised by Bibi Amarjit Kaur of Akhand Kirtani Jatha, who got mixed up with Jaswant Singh Thekedar of Gurdaspur, one of the original Panchas of Dal Khalsa and a family friend, included three incumbents from Police Department - two Head Constables and a Constable from Faridkot District.[28]

The news about the armed activity along with motivatedly overplayed propaganda to achieve Khalistan through armed means, combined with Jalandhar Press's diatribe against the Sikhs vis a vis Sant Nirankaris, and the objectives of Anandpur Sahib Resolution of 1973, helped to create misgivings among the Hindus.

Akalis were on the defensive by the time they held the massive convention in Ludhiana on October 28-29, 1978, with Jagdev Singh Talwandi as President. The Anandpur Sahib Resolution of

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1973 was put to a closer scrutiny and its authentic English version was adopted and released for general dissemination. Some of the phrases of the earlier resolution, handiwork of Kapur Singh I.C.S., were reworded in English translation, but the emphasis on real federal set up by redefining centre-state relations in the Indian constitutional infrastructure remained intact. That, however, did not help improve matters much.

The re-worded resolution did not become more palatable or yield any results. There was nothing in the 1973 or 1978 draft that by any stretch of imagination could be termed secessionist or violative of the Indian unity. In the words of Chand Joshi "There is a difference between a 'nation' and a 'sovereign state', and that A perusal of the three different versions presented at the Anandpur Sahib meeting would show that not a single one talks of a 'sovereign state'.[29] But the question again, as in 1949 when the Constitution was adopted, was one of intentions: whether the Sikh aspirations could be accommodated within the constitutional framework, to give them a sense of participation in the Indian democratic set up. When intentions are not clean, no amount of drafting or redrafting of a document can help. The Janta Party, lacking the necessary strength in the Upper House, was in no position to amend the Constitution to redefine the Centre-State relations, even if it wanted to. It really had no intentions whatsoever.

With Janta Party in power at the Centre and in Haryana, and sharing power in Punjab, it was possible for Akalis to arrange the holding of elections to the SGPC in 1979, after 13 years. The elections, due in 1971 were put off by Indira Gandhi whose Congress party had earlier made several unsuccessful attempts to capture the SGPC. Not that, Congress was reconciled to Akalis continuing their hold over the -SGPC. It had no hope of capturing it, even when Giani Zail Singh as Chief Minister was running away with the clothes of Akalis. It simply wanted to make the whole process of elections, and legitimacy of the SGPC set up, redundant.

Congress(I) through Giani Zail Singh got the opportunity to try its luck again, with no better results. Sant Bhindranwale, according to Surjeet Jalandhary, put up only one candidate, Bhai Amrik Singh son of his predecessor, Sant Kartar Singh, and President of AISSF from Beas. But Akalis put up Jiwan Singh Umaranangal, who resigned his Minister's post to successfully face him. Some 45 candidates had been put up by Dal Khalsa and Jagjit Singh Chauhan outfits[30] - both products of Congress(I). Congress(I) actively campaigned for them with the assistance of Bhindranwale. Only four of them were successful, with 136 seats going to Akalis. Obviously, by the time Congress even with the support of Sant Bhindranwale was not able to cause a dent in the Sikh support to Akali Dal.

Indira's policy of causing disruption all around was a success in breaking the Janta government at the Centre in mid-1979 on the issue of RSS alignment of former Jan Sangh elements. Now, Chaudhary Charan Singh took over as Prime Minister with Congress(I) support which was as hastily withdrawn leading to mid-term elections.

Sanjay tried to romp home Akalis by a proposition that they should accede to Congress the dominant position on Parliament seats in Punjab, in return for Akalis sharing seats with Congress for Punjab Assembly elections on 60:40 basis. Balwant Singh to whom he spoke informally had no authority to proceed, and nothing came out of the move.[31] Possibly, Badal banked upon the Akali-BJP (Bhartiya Janta Party, successor of Jan Sangh) alignment, representing the Sikhs and the Hindus respectively, to be a natural alliance. Also, this was not the first time that Congress was making such a proposition. In the absence of that, Congress worked upon dissensions within the Akali leadership over the issues facing the Central government, and reportedly drafted Jathedar Jagdev

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Singh Talwandi to play a fissiparous role during and after the forthcoming elections. Talwandi trained his guns on Akali Dal (Longowal) and played a divisive role, as suited his Congress mentors.

Indira adopted a new posture. With the aid of RSS, she marshalled Hindu support, as against the earlier plank of seeking support of backward classes, minorities and a section of caste-Hindus. She was voted to power at the Centre in January 1980 elections. Congress(I) won 12 of 13 Lok Sabha seats in Punjab. Sant Bhindranwale alongwith Jathedar Santokh Singh, who acted as Polling Agent, had played a prominent part in the election campaign of Sukhbans Kaur wife of Pritam Singh Bhinder, Police Commissioner, from Gurdaspur constituency which included Chowk Mehta. Bhindranwale also shared platform with Indira Gandhi during the election campaign.[32] A couple of candidates issued posters saying "Bhindranwale supports me." Bhindranwale also helped a couple of other candidates, including Raghunandan Lal Bhatia, then President Punjab Congress(I) from Amritsar constituency.

Punjab Assembly, as also other eight provincial assemblies, were dissolved. Congress(I) repeated its performance in the Punjab Assembly elections in June 1980 winning 63 seats, to Akalis 37, in a house of 117, to the chagrin of the latter who looked askance at Indira's methods and were not amused at their questionable ouster. It was in between these two elections that Bhindrawale's *bete noir* Baba Gurbachan Singh, Chief of Sant Nirankaris was, killed on April 24,1980, at Delhi, with Congress(I) or Union Government's complicity.

Indira was not, and not expected to be, magnanimous in her victory, especially after playing the Hindu card which gave a new orientation to her outlook. She got reconfirmed her Gangu-Brahmin ancestry by a reference to the family records maintained by Pandits at Mattan shrine in Kashmir valley. A small team led by Yash Pal Kapoor former M.P. in 1980 collected the data. This firmed up her resolve to carry on her war against the Sikhs to its logical conclusions.

The sort of things to follow was clear from the arbitrary manner in which Giani Zail Singh, Union Home Minister interfered in the Imposition and management of Sikh pilgrim parties to the Sikh Brines in Pakistan. The policy came into full action at the time of Ending of pilgrims' groups to Lahore on Guru Arjan Dev's martyrdom anniversary in May 1980. Home Ministry made a messy move to take over the work from External Affairs, but abandoned it. Giani Zail Singh, however, stuck his neck and nominated Jathedar Santokh Singh of Delhi to lead the pilgrims party. Traditionally, the SGPC used to nominate the leader of the party, as maximum number of pilgrims used to be nominated by it. The SGPC in protest refused to participate.

Santokh Singh, an ordinary citizen, holding no office in the Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee (DSGMC) either, had no wherewithals to organise *langar* (free kitchen) and religious services in Pakistan. The Sindhi devotees from Pakistan organised *langar* at Lahore, but the bills were not paid to the suppliers. This gave a bad name to the pilgrims. Santokh Singh collected the offerings and brought the money to India. According to some sources, these were distributed between him and some of his collaborators.

Shortly afterwards another pilgrims party under auspices of the SGPC went in June 1980 on the occasion of death anniversary of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, and under advice of the author (who was Chief Liaison Officer with the Pilgrims Party) cleared the bills of the previous month as well. The Sindhi devotees asked searching questions about disposal of the money taken by Jathedar Santokh Singh; whether the same had been deposited with Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management

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Committee, etc. etc. to which there was no answer. It was months later that Congress after amending the Delhi Gurdwara Act was a success in imposing him as President of the DSGMC.[32a] This type of interference in pilgrims parties was not repeated later.

Indira Gandhi found a strange bedfellow in President Zia ul Haq, President of Pakistan, whose mind was working on the same wavelength. Zia was a keen observer of the socio-political disruption that was being caused in the Indian Punjab. He felt that pushed to the walls, the Sikhs would either be crushed, or would assert their independence, either of which would not be an unwelcome development. Anyhow, it would usher in a long period of turmoil and instability. It was but natural for him to fish in the troubled waters. Pakistan has not forgotten Bangladesh: pledge taken every morning by cadets at Kakul academy reminds them of their commitment to take revenge.

By the end of 1978, Zia had announced that he would receive| any number of pilgrims from India to visit the Sikh shrines in Pakistan on the occasion of four pilgrimages in a year as hitherto: Baisakhi in April, Guru Arjan's martyrdom in May/June, Maharaja Ranjit Singh's death anniversary in end June, and Guru Nanak's birthday in October/November. And, the pilgrims would be permitted to visit all the shrines at Panja Sahib, Nankana Sahib and Lahore on each pilgrimage. He was partially influenced by similar arrangements for Haj pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia. He also agreed to receive the pilgrims in groups all the year round, except during the month of Ramazan. Already, Naxalite elements after their reactivation had sought to alert their contacts across the borders and had come into contact with Pakistani intelligence agencies.

The Indian authorities were specifically warned in 1979 during the Janta regime and again in 1980 when Indira had returned to power, of the nexus being established between Pakistani intelligence agencies and the undesirable, smuggler and criminal, elements, especially from the border districts of Punjab visiting Pakistan for pilgrimages. The suggested remedial measures were ignored as these impinged on small groups especially from Delhi some of whom were serving as» agents of Indian intelligence agencies or were possibly double agents."

Rather, with the establishment of highly specialised intelligence set up known as the Third Agency[34] under direct orders of Indira Gandhi, with a view to coordinate and organise multipronged controlled violence in Punjab, the various elements working haphazardly on the Indian side were canalised and inter alia, regular channels, for drug smuggling in return for Indian goods including hard drinks, etc. established. Since all intelligence and para-military people were not involved, this resulted in many channels of drug smuggling, not all controlled by the State agencies.

The spread of drug in the Indian Punjab, particularly among the youth including college and university students in early 1980s was direct upshot of the linkup. It also constituted another of Indira's planks to weaken the Sikh community. The immediate impact was that it affected the quality of Sikh youth and the already limited recruitment to the armed forces. The drug mafia working in close collaboration with criminal elements started functioning under the aegis of various militant and security set ups. It constituted another highly motivated but destabilising factor.

Precisely, by the middle of 1980, various militant set ups functioning in Punjab were: One, Dal Khalsa or Naxalities working in close collaboration with Indira Congress and select intelligence agencies; Two, Babbar Khalsa set up owing allegiance to Bibi Amarjit Kaur and Bibi Harsharan Kaur of Akhand Kirtani Jatha but highly critical of Bhindranwale, aimed mainly at elimination of

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Sant Nirankar is; Three, drug smuggler mafia and criminal elements, numerous groups, working independently or in close liaison with various security agencies and seeking refuge with the first or second militant group above, as the need arose; and Four, a highly specialised Indian intelligence set up working with selective militant and mafia groups and often at cross purposes because of high degree of operational secrecy involved. Sant Bhindranwale with his armed bodyguard could not be termed a militant group, but an extremist outfit. But since it was working in collaboration with Indira Congress, it was prone to be used by the government-inspired militants and others to provide cover to them in their distress.

With induction of Darbara Singh as Chief Minister of Punjab in mid-1980, Punjab became a battle ground between him and Union Home Minister, Giani Zail Singh. Not only were they heading contending groups, but also were poles apart. Zail Singh had used Akali weapons to contain them. Barbara Singh denied the very existence of anything like the Sikh culture. He stated, "There was a Sikh culture before. That Sikh culture has now reached the limit. Sikh culture is now dead. . . . Now the Sikh culture has been converted into composite culture. *That is what I am doing*."[35]

Hence, Darbara Singh established one of the most communal anti-Sikh governments in Punjab. Its mission was transformation of the Sikh culture into the composite one! In that, he was avidly assisted by the Punjab Chief Secretary, Ishwar Chandra Puri. The duo sought to promote the Congress brand of secularism. Puri administration applied a simple yardstick. A Sikh who was maintaining his *keshas*, hairs unshorn, was a communalist; only that Sikh who trimmed his beard, better still shaved off, could be secular. Thus, the Sikh employees in Punjab government were victimised in promotions, transfers and deployment. How far this had the blessings of Indira cannot, be gainsaid. But she could not but be amused. It is commonly asserted that Darbara Singh was the only Sikh leader not to have had an apprenticeship with Akali Dal, and was a class by himself. Even without the complicating factor of Zail-Darbara conflict, Bhindranwale, placed as he was in mid-1980, was bound to be affected by the goings on in Punjab.

The defeat of Akalis in the Assembly elections caused a lot of jubilation in the Hindu circles who began calling the Akali-Janta coalition as a 'Sikh government'. The reaction was rather on the same scale as was that of Muslim League following the resignation of Congress provincial governments in 1939! Short of celebrating the 'deliverance day', the Hindus marhsalled facts and figures of placement of the Sikhs in various positions to substantiate their contentions.[36]

The Punjabi Hindu easily forgot, that shorn of scheduled castes and the migrant Bihari labour, according to 1971 census, they constituted only 15 percent of Punjab's population. Though Arya Samajists constituted one-third of that i.e. hardly 5 percent of the total population, they had greater propensities for mischief as they controlled the. Hindu media. Indira Gandhi regarded Punjabi Hindus, who had become a minority after formation of the Punjabi speaking state, as her special responsibility. They were to be pampered and kept in good humour.[37]

The Punjabi Hindu press now became acrimonious and started a malicious reinterpretation of events leading to the partition of the sub-continent. They asserted that the Sikhs were at the old game of establishing Khalsa *Raj*. Virendra of *Partap* warned that the Hindus would turn Punjab into Assam, and lead an agitation to throw out foreigners from the state. He regarded the Sikhs as unwelcome intruders who should be shown their place. Lala Jagat Narain, another Congress leader, of *Hind Samachar* and *Punjab Kesri*, regarded extremists espousing Khalistan as true reflexers of the Sikh mind as against the moderate Akalis, 'deft in deception of their inner feelings'. He also berated

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BJP for its alliance with Akalis and articulated Hindu political helplessness. Because of its strident attitude, the circulation of *Punjab Kesri* went up to 242,000 copies in early 1981, as against 81,000 in 1977.

Darbara Singh administration came upto Hindu expectations though Jagat Narain's son Ramesh Chandra saw no difference between Bhindranwale, Darbara Singh and Santokh Singh, for "all Sikhs are Sikhs."[38]

A mention may now be made of the role of Dr. Jagjit Singh Chauhan who had returned from abroad in July 1977 in search for a political career. Akalis then in power had nothing to offer him; Congress(I) then in wilderness sought to use him as it had done in early 1970s. He remained in close touch with Giani Zail Singh and met Indira Gandhi a number of times before the general elections. In 1978-79, he played the assigned role in the SGPC elections, and also in propping up Dal Khalsa Naxalites. In November 1979, Chauhan installed in the Golden Temple complex a small toy transmitter, a propaganda gimmick, which did not violate the Indian Telegraph Act. After Indira's coming into power, he again met her before announcing at Anandpur Sahib on Baisakhi, April 12, 1980, the formation of National Council of Khalistan with himself as President and Balbir Singh Sandhu, an unsuccessful teacher and an unsuccessful journalist, as Secretary General.[39]

Uptil now he had been liberally funded by Indira Congress. In May 1980, he left for London wherefrom the following month he announced the formation of 'Khalistan'; a similar announcement was made in Amritsar by Sandhu who also released stamps and passport of Khalistan, as if all in a great fun. The Intelligence Bureau men present were more interested in finding out as to what journalists had to say. The inaction of authorities gave credence to Akali Dal(L) charge that the Khalistan movement was a political stunt inspired by Congress(I).[40] Jagjit Singh Chauhan and his set up continued to provide a lot of grist to the publicity mills of the Hindu press to carry on its propaganda war against the Sikhs.

In another few months Chauhan was becoming stale and fresh inputs were needed to make the melodrama go on. This was provided by the Presidential Address of Ganga Singh Dhillon (President of Nankana Sahib Foundation and in touch with President Ziaul Haq of Pakistan in quest for greater Sikh participation in the running of Sikh shrines in Pakistan) at the non-political, and pro-government Chief Khalsa Diwan organised, Sikh Educational Conference in March 1981 at Chandigarh. Dhillon rightfully spoke of the Sikhs as a nation. And, the Conference adopted a meaningful resolution asking for associate status at the United Nations on the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organisation) pattern. But the intentions were questionable. Dal Khalsa came into prominence as its activists lustily cheered Dhillon on his 'Sikhs are a nation' talk.

The *White Paper* issued by the Government of India mentions of Dr. Jagjit Singh Chauhan's link up with Ganga Singh Dhillon. That was part of the story. Dhillon had visited India in 1979 and, at Karnal, held detailed discussions with Giani Zail Singh who, according to Dhillon's letter to Gajinder Singh, an intermediary, was to provide finances and "other required things" for some surreptitious purposes.[41] Obviously, Zail Singh sought to use Ganga Singh Dhillon for the same purpose as he had done with Dr. Chauhan. There was truth in Atal Behari Vajpayee's assertion that both Zail Singh and Darbara Singh were supporting the Khalistan movement.[42] They also roped in Jagdev Singh Talwandi who lent support to Dhillon's proposition at Anandpur Sahib in April 1981.

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This not unnaturally gave grist to the Hindu media whether Sikhs were a *Qaum* - translated as nation, nationality or a distinctive group - or not. The coy Chief Khalsa Diwan dissociated itself with the resolution, but the SGPC came out with a resolution affirming that the Sikhs are a *Qaum*. Sant Longowal, however, made distinction between the Sikh nation and the Sikh sovereign state.

As a matter of fact, Hindus were unnecessarily becoming peevish at the use of word *Qaum* for the Sikhs. Historically speaking, Sikhs had become a distinctive *Qaum* by 17th century; and so had the Marathas been welded as a *Qaum* by Shivaji. A sense of *Qaumiat* or nationality a-ose in Hindus in parts only in the 19th century. Tilak contended in second decade of 20th century that India was not yet a nation. India's only field Marshal, Sam Manekshaw, in a foreword to Maj Gen (Retd) Joginder Singh's book *Behind the Scene* (1992) reemphasised he point when he wrote, that, "There is no national integration and India as yet has not become a nation state." In the fifth decade since Independence, India is rather redefining the contours of its nationhood, and it is still in the process of making of a nation. Anyway, the purpose of adding acrimony to the debate in Punjab for which Garga Singh Dhillon had willy nilly been used by Zail Singh had been achieved.

Obviously Giani Zail Singh was succeeding too well in creating a frankenstien's monster in the shape of a movement for Khalistan that would strike at the very roots of Indian unity. Early in 1930s, in similar circumstances the scheme for Pakistan was sponsored by Chaudhary Rahmat Ali of Cambridge University, which was dubbed by the then responsible Muslim leaders as a 'students scheme,' 'chimerical,' aid 'impracticable'. But it matured quite early, though Rahmat Ali faded away. It is debatable whether Indira Gandhi had any appreciation of historical processes. However, in March 1981, she wrote to the Home Ministry that while "we should not get excited, it is necessary that this (Khalistan Movement) does not grow." In another month she wanted that "some action be taken" but cautioned that "careful thought is needed".[43] Obviously, she did not want to call off her sinister plan to crush the Sikhs in the name of nonexistent demand for Khalistan.

Pursuant t» her concerns, Giani Zail Singh and Darbara Singh on May 1, 198 , decided to "patch up their differences". Zail Singh immediately condemned Khalistan as an "abstract concept supported by a microscopic faction devoid of nationalism."[44] That anyhow did not mean any change in the policies being pursued.

The Hindu, were in a nasty mood questioning the very rationale of Sikhism. Thin followed the demand by the AISSF closely aligned with Sant Bhindranwale for declaring Amritsar as holy city. They asked for shifting of Pan-Biri-Cigarette and intoxicant shops outside the walled city by the end of May 1981 on the pattern of sacred Hindu centres like Haridwar and Varanasi. The Akali leaders fell in line and sought cooperation of urban Hindu leaders to get the demand conceded. This presented a great opportunity to the mischief makers.

A couple of days before May 31, fixed by the AISSF for demonstration the Hindus from Indira Congress, BJP, Arya Samaj and other Hindi organisations, held a massive demonstration asking for ban on sale and use of meat and liquor as well from within the city limits. That was quite unexceptional. But, the malicious intentions of demonstrators were manifest in their having cigarette packets on poles and sword ends. They raised provocative slogans, "*Biri-Cigarettes piyen ge, Hum shaan se jiyen ge*" -We will smoke Biris and Cigarettes, and live in aplomb. This gave momentum to the AISSF demonstration on May 31, 1981, led by Sant Bhindranwale. There was some violence and a dozen persons were killed in police firing. Bitterness in Hindu-Sikh relations was on the increase.

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During the next couple of months attempts were made to atomise the Akali Dal around various groups. Tohra though ideologically close to Talwandi chose to remain with Akali Dal(L). Sukhjinder Singh quit the party over the issue of Khalistan, while Talwandi orchestrated a series of marches during the monsoon session of Parliament, pressing for acceptance of Anandpur Sahib Resolution, to distract Akali Dal(L) from political and economic issues. Bhindranwale accompanied by Congress(I) activists continued his missionary tours of Punjab districts. Congress(I) also helped maintain Jathedar Santokh Singh in power in DSGMC despite his having lost majority support. The turning point came at the World Sikh Convention held at Manji Sahib in the Golden Temple complex in July 1981 presided over by Sant Longowal. It placed primacy on implementation of Anandpur Sahib Resolution by end August, failing that, *Dharam Yudh*, holy struggle, was to be launched. The government's evil designs to control the Gurdwaras by manipulating *jathas* for pilgrimage to Pakistan, and by foisting Jathedar Santokh Singh as President of DSGMC by questionable means was condemned.

Indira Gandhi now wanted to use Jatheder Santokh Singh to defy Akal Takht and bring it down in general Sikh estimation. She looked puzzled at Akal Takht's hold over the Sikh mind and the willingness with which the Sikhs subjected themselves to its punishment though it had no temporal force at its command to enforce its decisions. Jathedar Santokh Singh had been summoned at Akal Takht. After prevarications he had decided to present himself at Akal Takht on September 10, 1981. Indira was very unhappy at Santokh Singh's decision.

The march to Parliament on September 7, by Akali Dal(L) was subjected to harsh police treatment. This, and the presentation of 45 political, economic, religious and social demands by Akalis on September 8, were just coincidental. To thwart Santokh Singh, some big incident was needed. And, that was provided by the murder of Lala Jagat Narain on September 9, at Ladowal railway crossing in Ludhiana district. There is circumstantial evidence of linkage between the two, and of the murder being engineered by interested elements who wanted to drive political mileage out of it.

Giani Zail Singh rang up Jathedar Santokh Singh on the night of September 9, 1981, at the office of Station Master, Old Delhi Railway Station, wherefrom he was leaving by the Frontier Mail. He pleaded with Santokh Singh not to go to Punjab in view of the situation arising out of Jagat Narain's murder. Santokh Singh was adamant. Finally, Zail Singh conveyed Indira's extreme displeasure to Santokh Singh, to dissuade him from undertaking the journey, but to no effect. For Lala Jagat Narain's murder, Nachhattar Singh of Rode village (wherefrom Bhindranwale came) already in police custody was declared to have been arrested on the spot, and was believed to have named Sant Bhindranwale as the one who had ordered the killing of Jagat Narain.

The murder of Lala Jagat Narain constituted a watershed in the Punjab developments. Who killed him and why? The *White Paper* is quite explicit: hat "Lala Jagat Narain was murdered because of his criticism of the murder of Sant Nirankaris."[45] There is no doubt that he was present at Amritsar at the time of Sant Nirankari firing on the Sikhs, and stood witness at Karnal trial in favour of the accused. Surjeet Jalandhary propounds the same views.[46] In short, it is projected both by the government and by Bhandranwale's biographer, that Jagat Narain' s was like any other murder of persons deeply involved in criminal cases in Punjab. It tends to exclude the possibility of murder being engineered by a panthic set up, which could very well be the case. It was another matter that his family sought to make him a martyr.

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As for murderers, the *White Paper* mentioned of both the Babbar Khalsa and Dal Khalsa claiming responsibility for that.[47] Both the claims could not be true. The claim of Babbar Khalsa, which was hostile to Bhindranwale, could be more plausible; but there is reason to believe that it was the work of Dal Khalsa, and pre- planned with direct participation of central intelligence set up. The promptness with which Bhindranwale and his nephew Swaran Singh, as also Nachhattar Singh, were indicted pointed to that. Jagat Narain lost his life without Indira achieving her objective of persuading Santokh Singh to defy Akal Takht!

Bhindranwale came to know of the warrants of his arrest through the news bulletin of All India Radio when he was at village Chandokalan, in Haryana. He was on his way to Bombay for religious preachings. He also heard of the Punjab police plan to eliminate him in a false encounter. For arresting him, Darbara Singh sought assistance of Haryana Chief Minister Bhajan Lal. According to Kuldip Nayar, Giani Zail Singh conveyed Bhajan Lal instructions over phone and accordingly he (as a senior police officer told Satish Jacob of B.B.C.) placed an official car at the disposal of Bhindranwale to whisk him away, back to his head-quarters in Chowk Mehta.[48] Dal Khalsa activists provided protective escort.

The Punjab police party reached Chandokalan on September 14, 1981, and not finding Bhindranwale there wantonly thrashed some of his followers. It put to fire his two preaching vans, containing two volumes of holy *Granth Sahib* and other religious literature. Local Hindu mobs joined in this incendiarism. That later constituted one of the factors of Bhindranwale's alienation from his mentors.

Meanwhile, the Hindu crowds at Jagat Narain's funeral threw stones at the Sikh passersby, and raised anti-Sikh slogans: *kachha, kara aur kirpan - bhejenge inhen Pakistan*- underwear, steel bracelet and sword - essentials of Sikhism - will be made to run to Pakistan.

There was immediately a perceptible change in the attitude of Darbara Singh to Bhindranwale, as a result of Jathedar Santokh Singh's intervention with Indira. Punjab government on orders from "the highest quarters"[49] permitted Bhindranwale, since advised by Akali leaders at their meeting at Anandpur Sahib, to offer himself for arrest, to choose his mode and time of arrest. This was fixed for September 20. A day earlier, a Punjab police car took him to the Golden Temple for a dip in the holy tank. Punjab police also ignored Union Home Ministry's orders to confiscate his weapons, or at least cancel their licenses. In the words of Kuldip Nayar, "It looked as if Barbara Singh was now Bhindranwale's godfather."[50] The Union Home Secretary, T.N. Chaturvedi's top secret scathing indictment of Punjab government after a visit to Punjab was quietly shelved,[51] as it did not suit the bosses that be.

Bhindranwale on September 20, amidst a great fanfare, and in the presence of *lakhs* of Sikhs from the surrounding areas, offered himself for arrest, with a clear advice to his followers to remain calm. In a highly emotional speech, he said," The truth will ultimately prevail." Sant Longowal and Jathedar Tohra from Akali Dal were present; so was Jathedar Santokh Singh from Delhi, with a briefing from Indira Gandhi.

Tohra made Jathedar Santokh Singh to sit in his car and they left for Amritsar. Midway, Santokh Singh met a senior police officer coming from the opposite direction, alighted and travelled back to Chowk Mehta in the police jeep. On return, Santokh Singh delivered a most provocative

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speech to the gathering, causing a clash with the police. This resulted in about 25 people being killed and several injured. Bhindranwale by now had undoubtedly become a political force. He said, "What I could not achieve in a year, they have done for me in a week."[52]

Bhindranwale's arrest marked the beginning of the wave of terrorism. The same day, a youth on a motor cycle fired in a market place at Jalandhar leaving 4 killed and 12 injured. The *White Paper* lists incidents of firing, bomb explosions and sabotage of rail track in almost all parts of Punjab between September 21 and October 15 - the release of Bhindranwale - including the hijacking of Indian Airlines plane to Lahore on September 29, by Dal Khalsa activists led by founder Panch Gajinder Singh (who had been closer to Zail Singh) to draw international attention to Bhindranwale's arrest. This was, however, a most amateurish hijacking, with hijackers running out of ideas on landing at Lahore. The way Bhindranwale highlighted this hijacking, it seemed, he was drawing more closer to Dal Khalsa Naxalites without knowing their real character. A pattern of professional killing emerged. Naxalites were on the prowl, in a different garb. It had its impact on Hindu and Sikh journalists in Punjab. The Editors Guild of India team after touring Punjab reported that newspapermen in Punjab - Chandigarh, Jalandhar, Amritsar - by their own admission were divided all the way down on communal lines.[53]

In the prevailing atmosphere of violence, the mafia operators and criminal elements chose to pass out their activity as sub-part of political activity. The politicisation of lumpen elements and lumpenisation of politics went hand in hand from September 1981 onwards till the things went really outside the limits of controlled violence, or rather reach the stage which could enable the State to resort to a surgical operation.

The police not unnaturally treated the emergent violence as a law and order problem. The security agencies in order to show results in the highly fluid situation began to resort to third degree methods on suspects, and plant stories of false encounters to cover up deaths in police custody. Because of known proximity of Bhindranwale to Giani Zail Singh, such affected elements started approaching him for redressals. This caused ruffling of tempers and counter mobilization. The criminal elements also sought to infiltrate Dal and Babbar Khalsa outfits. So did the intelligence agencies. It was free for all. The situation had great potentialities for mischief. A decisive stage of simulated violence seemed at hand. That would make moderate leadership of Akali Dal irrelevant. Indira seemed determined to strike the final blow.

On the very next day of arrest of Bhindranwale, Indira visited Chandigarh and invited Akalis to sham talks.[54] Akali Dal submitted revised list of 15 demands: implementation of Anandpur Sahib resolution on centre-state relations; redistribution of river waters; merger of Chandigarh with Punjab without transferring from it Abohar and Fazilka to Haryana; formulation of All India Gurdwara Act. Akalis also asked for unconditional release of Bhindranwale. This was after Indira's heart.

On the eve of first round of talks, Indira ordered Barbara Singh to release Bhindranwale. The magistrate dutifully arrived in Ferozepur jail on October 15, 1981, and acquitted him unconditionally. At the first round of talks the following day, Indira with a mischievous smile told Akalis that "Bhindranwale is not a good man. You have been supporting him unnecessarily. "Akalis retorted, "You supported him for four years; we have supported him for twenty days."[55] They gave details of Congress(I)'s collaboration with Bhindranwale since 1979.

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There was brief discussion and main issues were identified -the sharing of waters and territorial claims. Indira left it to the then Foreign Minister, P. V. Narashimha Rao, to deal with them in detail. The selection of Foreign Minister to talk to Akalis on Punjab was significant. Earlier, Akalis on hint from Zail Singh did not accept Swaran Singh being associated with the talks. The meeting ended on optimistic note.[56]

The second round of talks took place on November 26, 1981. It was preceded by two rounds of talks between Akalis and Narasimha Rao. These were regarded by one Akali leader as sheer "waste of time."[57] Akalis talked about the desirability of All India Radio having a channel for religious music and *kirtan* so that all religions could benefit; reduced intake of the Sikhs in the armed forces following certain orders issued during the emergency, and taking into view other considerations. Indira remarked, "Then, all of you people will come in". Tohra quipped, "Are we not equal citizens?" But most of the discussion took place on division of waters. Akalis wanted to reopen the 1955 agreement and stated their objections to Indira's 1976 Award. Akalis pleaded to include Jumna waters which earlier undivided Punjab utilised and were now available to Haryana to form part of the common pool, but drew a blank. The talks were inconclusive.

R.N. Kao, Head of RAW, the external intelligence agency, advised Indira that he saw great potentialities in the nascent violence, professional in character, to overtake normal political processes in Punjab. But Bhindranwale since his release in mid-October was striking a discordant note. He seemed more indebted to Akalis for making an issue of his false involvement in Jagat Narain murder case which led to his release. He was also bitter about the police high-handedness and incendiarism at Chandokalan, and also at the time of his arrest at Chowk Mehta. Giani Zail Singh now because of his official position had limitations in influencing Bhindranwale.

Indira wanted Santokh Singh to perform that function and also serve as a conduit for sustaining terrorism in Punjab. Earlier in August 1981, she had wanted him to defy Akal Takht summons to appear before it.

Santokh Singh, a politically mature person saw through Indira's nefarious game and declined. It was one thing for him to play a divergent role in Delhi's Sikh politics, but quite another to thwart Akali leadership in Punjab. That soured his relations with Indira. Santokh Singh told his family members that his days were numbered as he was not performing the acts Indira wanted him to. On December 21, 1981, finding him exchanging hot words with Pritam Singh Sandhu, a fellow member of DSGMC, his security guard from police at first shot Sandhu and then Jathedar Santokh Singh.

Thereafter, the police went to Sandhu's house in Vishnu Garden and took into custody his licensed revolver. It projected a story of clash and murder of Santokh Singh by Sandhu. The government's media high ups phoned the news agencies and newspapers to ensure that only the official version of the news was published. The report of the ballistic expert, however, showed that both Santokh Singh and Sandhu had been shot by the same weapon. Santokh Singh's security guard now denied that the had fired at all! Even murder case was not registered; government refused to order a CBI enquiry. Instead a judicial enquiry by a High Court Judge was ordered and conducted in a perfunctory manner.[58] Indira and the government media, thereafter, started promoting Jathedar Rachhpal Singh to fill the void in Delhi.

Bhindranwale came to Delhi to attend the *bhog* (last rites) of Jathedar Santokh Singh when both Giani Zail Singh and Buta Singh, Union Minister for Sports and Parliamentary Affairs, touched

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his feet, and seemed to make up. Bhindranwale spoke of Hindu-Sikh unity as an article of faith with him, but the Hindus did not believe him. It was surmised that Bhindranwale was operating at a different level and could still be of use to Indira Congress. On his way back, Bhindranwale moved freely in Haryana and Punjab preaching *pure* Sikhism.

It was in this background that Indira in consultations with the Law Ministry, and not Irrigation Ministry, issued another Award on December 31, 1981, on Punjab river waters. She arbitrarily raised the estimated availability of water to 17.17 MAF (million acre field); i.e. about 2 MAF more than before. She allocated Punjab 4.22 MAF, Haryana 3.50 MAF, Rajasthan 8.60 MAF, Delhi 0.20 MAF, and J&K 0.65 MAF. The crux of the Award was provision for completion of Sutlej-Yumna link canal within two years, i.e. by December 31, 1983. Punjab Chief Minister, Darbara Singh, though protesting at the inequity of the Award, was forced virtually at gun point to withdraw the suit earlier lodged by Badal government with the Supreme Court.

The manner of issuing this award, without consulting Akalis with whom the talks were still going on, showed her contempt for the Sikhs. Similarly, she convened the third round of talks with Akalis on April 5, 1982, a day before she was to inaugurate the digging of Sutlej-Yumna link canal at Kapuri village in Patiala district. That was an affront to Akali leaders. The third round was a cold and a ritualistic get together when Akalis felt insulted.[59] In the circumstances, Akalis vainly proposed re-referring the river waters to the Supremes Court; their proposal for an All India Gurdwara Act was scuttled on the specious plea that all the Sikhs were not agreeable!

Indira had obviously decided to fight out Akalis because of political vendetta. Meanwhile, the arrest of Harsimran Singh, President of Dal Khalsa, wanted in half dozen murder cases, at the residence of driver of a serving Congress(I) Minister in Punjab, caused sensation. His confessional statement spilled the beans by naming senior Congress(I) leaders and administrators both at the Centre and in Punjab, including Giani Zail Singh, as also Tohra and Talwandi from Akali leaders who provided him succor and shelter.[60] But the clues were inconvenient, and not followed up. Harsimran Singh had obviously been used as a tool by Congress(I) leaders with Indira's blessings in their confrontation with Akalis.

When Indira was inaugurating the digging of Sutlej-Yumna link canal on April 6, 1982, at Kapuri near Patiala, Akalis were holding a protest meeting at Ghannaur, 6 kms away. Some of them were arrested. Indira by her arrogance thrust upon Akalis this conflict. On April 24, 1982, they gave a call to stop digging of the Canal, *nehar roko*. Joined by CPM, they started an agitation from Kapuri itself.

To give a new twist to the Punjab situation, severed heads of cows were placed before the Hindu temples at Amritsar, the following two days. According to governments' media management, Dal Khalsa claimed responsibility. This is also reflected in the *White Paper*. The denial of Dal Khalsa activists was deliberately got blocked out. In an interview, they told Dr. Gopal Singh of Himachal University, that it was the work of Darbara Singh's Congress(I) agents.[61] If so, orders must have come from the highest quarters. It is for record that some Muslim butchers from Saharanpur recruited to throw cow heads at places of Hindu worship were arrested at Amritsar,[62] but the inconvenient news was suppressed.

The government's ire fell on Dal Khalsa and National Council of Khalistan, both creations of Giani Zail Singh with Indira's blessing. These were banned on May 1, 1982. Union Home

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Minister, Giani Zail Singh, who knew better about the placement of cow heads, was over-ruled. He was told by Indira henceforth not to speak on Punjab or profer any advice unsolicited.[63]

Bhindranwale by now had taken full circle and matured into a bitter critic of Indira and her policies. Basically, he was a cuckoo which had got mixed up among the crows. In the words of Bhai Gurdas, cuckoo lays its eggs in the nest of a crow who hatches them. The young cuckoos flutter in discomfort as they grow, and a time comes when they part company with the crow family. They realise that they belong to a different species. Bhindranwale's first fluttering came in September 1981 at Chando Kalan. The Uttar Pradesh (U.P.) police's shearing of *keshas*, sacred hair, of a Sikh youth in the second week of April 1982 in a mood of pique,[64] took him a stage further as to the real nature of Congress(I). And in end-April, Darbara Singh's attempts to arrest him when he was in Bombay on a preaching mission, constituted the last straw. The Police Commissioner at Bombay, as he was about to enter the Gurdwara and arrest Bhindranwale, received "top secret message" from Zail Singh's Home Ministry not to do so. Bhindranwale, as at Chandokalan, was rushed back to his head- quarters in Chowk Mehta in 30 hours.

The agent provocateurs continued their operations by desecrating the Sikh and the Hindu places of worship. The *White Paper* takes note of a number of such incidents during May 1982 affecting the Sikh Gurdwaras and the Hindu Temples, especially in Amritsar.[65] The SGPC after a short while called off *nehar roko*, stop the canal, agitation. It was to be resumed later from Amritsar from August 4. Akalis were having second thoughts about the timing of resumption of the agitation and meanwhile (July 13) had made a puerile gesture to Indira by supporting the candidature of Giani Zail Singh, their tormentor, for Presidentship of India. Darbara Singh, however, sent a message to Bhindranwale to start a *morcha* earlier. He gave him reasons for that by arresting two of his workers on July 17. Bhai Amrik Singh, President of AISSF, was arrested on trumped up charges of murdering a Nirankari two days later, and Thara Singh on July 20. Thus provoked, Bhindranwale shifted from Chowk Mehta to Guru Nanak Nivas, and launched a *morcha*, agitation, for release of his men, in the process pre-empting Akalis.

All the work done by Rajinder Singh Bhatia, who was in touch with Rajiv Gandhi, to defer the *morcha* indefinitely went awry.[66] Darbara Singh felt that R. S. Bhatia in collaboration with Rajiv Gandhi was trying to bring about Congress(I)-Akali coalition that would replace him as Chief Minister. When Akali leaders told Bhindranwale to merge his *morcha* with their *Dharam Yudh* under the leadership of Sant Longowal, he readily agreed. Akalis were strictly against any slogan for Khalistan, and Longowal told Kuldip Nayar that those who were raising such a slogan were 'agents of the Congress party'.[67] The Akali demonstrators in front of Parliament on October 11, against the contrived accident of a bus carrying Akali detenues a month earlier, were fired upon by a panicky police.[68] All the 50,000 *satyagrahis* were, however, released on the eve of Diwali, October 15, when fresh attempts were made for Indira-Akali accord.

Swaran Singh, drafted for the purpose, began talks with Akali leaders on October 25, 1982, on their demands one by one. They quickly arrived at an agreement. Akalis agreed to have *kirtan* at Amritsar being relayed from All India Radio, Jalandhar, instead of its being broadcast from Golden Temple itself; Chandigarh to go to Punjab, and a territorial commission to go into all the Punjab and Haryana claims on the basis of their linguistic complexion; the sharing of water issue to go to Supreme Court Judge who may be assisted by a team of experts. Akalis agreed to abide by the decision and left it to Swaran Singh to choose the mode of reference. Akalis agreed to Indira's appointing a committee to look into the Centre-State relations envisaged in Anandpur Sahib

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Resolution; and Akalis withdrew their demand for renaming the Flying Mail train as Harimandir Express.

Swaran Singh had kept his lines of communications with Indira alive, and conveyed her the details of the agreement. She praised Swaran Singh and accepted the agreement. There and then she constituted a Cabinet sub-committee consisting of Pranab Mukherjee, Venkatarman, Narasimha Rao and P.C. Sethi as members. Swaran Singh explained the details of the draft agreement to them. They accepted it and told Swaran Singh that a fresh reference to the Prime Minister was not needed, as they had the full authority to convey government's acceptance. Swaran Singh accordingly conveyed the government's approval of the agreement, and a draft statement to be placed before Parliament the following day. Meanwhile, Indira overwhelmed by her Gangu-Brahmin heritage changed her mind, as had her father in 1961. The statement placed before Parliament was materially different than the agreed version, and did not cover all the points.[69]

On November 4, 1982, Akalis at first announced that they would 'disturb' the forthcoming Asian Games in Delhi. Shortly afterwards, they re-emphasised that they would be holding only a symbolic protest. Fresh talks began between Akalis and the government side.[70] Balwant Singh (either on his own or at the instance of Tohra, one does not know) phoned Harkishan Singh Surjeet of CPM to the venue of the ongoing talks, and unnecessarily made him an obstructionist factor in the bilateral negotiations between Akali Dal and the government. Nonetheless, a near settlement emerged. The government on its own offered to release Amrik Singh and Thara Singh[71] and the rest, except those involved in violence.

Indira again had second thoughts. A top Congress(I) leader told Kuldip Nayar that "Mrs. Gandhi herself sent for Bhajan Lal Haryana Chief Minister and told him about the proposal" - about Chandigarh and territorial adjustments. The agreement was torpedoed. Bhajan Lal took the responsibility that no Akali crossed into Delhi to create any disturbances.

Indira Gandhi's at first agreeing to and then reneging on the two agreements, one after the other, within a few days of each other, showed that her mind was gravely disturbed by her overall strategy in operation since mid-seventies, and broad objectives she sought to achieve.[72]

What happened to the Sikhs in Haryana at macro level was repetition of what they were facing in Punjab at micro level during the year. Since the banning of Dal Khalsa in May 1982, the pattern of killings in Punjab underwent a substantial change, and in a matter of couple of months, law and order machinery virtually collapsed. The police in order to show results raided the houses of suspects, beat up inmates and killed a few of them in 'fake' encounters. Respectable Akali leaders like Kulwant Singh Nagoke were shown to have been killed in 'encounters' while they were in police custody. The police excesses became a byword and Akalis had nothing but to offer *saropaos* (robes of honour) to the victims of murder and violence. Both Longowal and Talwandi groups of Akali Dal brought out lists of 'murdered' *amritdhari* Sikhs killed in police lock up and encounters.

Bhindranwale with his affiliations with Dal Khalsa, and a more cardinal attitude, was most bitter at the treatment meted to innocent Sikhs. There was wide schism between perception of the administration and of the people. This made Peoples Union for Civil Liberties(PUCL) to sponsor a two man team consisting of Mr. Justice V. M. Tarkunde as Chairman and Kuldip Nayar as member to assess the police excesses.

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In the words of Kuldip Nayar, "We had no hesitation in saying in our report that the police had behaved like a barbarous force out for revenge. They had even set houses of a few absconders on fire and destroyed utensils, clothes and whatever they found in them. "Relatives of absconders were harassed and even detained. Even many days after the excesses committed by the police, we could see how fear-stricken the people were."[73]

What happened to the Sikhs in Haryana in November 1982 was worse, shaking them emotionally and affecting their sense of belonging to India. Bhajan Lal issued blanket orders prohibiting travel of the Sikhs through the state. No distinction was made between a Sikh and an Akali. The Haryana police maltreated every Sikh without any inhibitions, including senior Congress leaders like Swaran Singh and Amarjit Kaur, Congress(I) M.P., despite their telling them who they were. The Sikhs simply were not permitted to proceed to Delhi. Retired Army Generals, senior officers, visitors from abroad or ordinary citizens were treated alike. They were subjected to harsh treatment and humiliated.

Bhajan Lal behaved like a minion of Satan out to degrade the Sikhs and made them realise that they were non-entities - third class or even unwanted citizens. The Hindus, as if they were from the ruling race, were not even questioned. Amarjit Kaur, ruling party M.P., was in tears when she narrated her horrible experience in the Central Hall of Parliament. She, however, did not have the courage to resign from the party at indignities meted to her.[74]

Neither the government - Central or Provincial - nor the Hindus - intellectuals or mediamen - with few exceptions, offered any apologies at this mass degradation of the Sikh people. The newspapers blacked out the excesses as if the Sikhs simply did not exist, or had become irrelevant in India.

Talking about Khalistan did not now become disrespectful, though neither Akali Dal(L) leaders nor Bhindranwale vouchsafed for it. The net result was that it gave wind to extremism with all sorts of elements including the Babbar Khalsa coming to the forefront, not to kill, but to instill fear. Bhindranwale also gained tremendously.

Indira drew sadistic pleasure at this turnabout to the Akali threat to make some sort of show at the Asian games. She was prepared for a long drawn confrontation against Akalis and sought to take it a stage further by making them enter into unending all-party negotiations, and by encouraging terroristic groups to erode the credibility of the moderates.

After having been betrayed by Indira's reneging twice from agreements in October-November, and after having been subjected to national shame and humiliation with impunity, it was futile for Akalis to expect anything from the all-party talks that began in January 1983 and went to ten rounds till they called these off in February 1984. By their very nature, these talks were not expected to yield positive results.

Akalis kept on pressure at first by asking their MPs and MLAs to resign effective from February 21, 1983, and simultaneously asking for *Shaheedi* volunteers, martyr squads. Indira announced acceptance of three religious demands of Akalis at Gurdwara Bangia Sahib, New Delhi, to give credit to the pro-Congress group led by Harbans Singh Manchanda.[75] She, however could not implement them.

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Akalis went in for *Rasta Roko*, (block the roads) agitation on April 4, 1983, when there was widespread violence all over Punjab, particularly Gurdaspur, Amritsar, Patiala, and Faridkot regions, leaving 21 dead. The Hindu youth and women also participated in *Rasta Roko*. Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah, too, threw his weight behind Akalis.

The sort of things to follow was clear from the camp at Anandgarh (Anandpur Sahib) on Baisakhi, April 14, 1983 to train 'true Khalsa' to face the onslaught of modern Mughal - Indira Gandhi. It was resolved, inter alia, to make concerted attempts to secure unlicensed weapons and create secret channels of communications. Significantly, such type of decisions are never taken at public meetings. Obviously, there was a lot of infiltration. In the words of Chand Joshi, it "was a clear victory for the extremists, aided directly by the Tohra-Talwandi groups and the Congress(I) elements within the movement."[76] Badal made futile attempts to point out at the links between factions of Congress and Akali Dal, who were "willing to hoodwink the movement by secret parleys."[77] At Akal Takht, Amritsar, Sant Longowal administered oath to over 30,000 Akali volunteers, the first batch of *shahidi Jatha* to make supreme sacrifices for protection and prosperity of Sikh panth. Two more batches, making it a total of 100,000 volunteers, were to be administered similar oath on April 27, and May 12, 1983.

There was duplicity all around and it was a complex game. In the context of the forthcoming elections in Jammu and Kashmir where Indira was playing the Hindu card, a move was needed to temporarily neutralise Akalis because of sizeable Sikh vote in Jammu. Already, as a measure of identity, Akalis had permitted their members dual membership of the National Conference. Indira drew Akali leaders to secret parleys with two of her Ministers who were assisted by senior officials on April 21, 1983 at Airport Lounge, Chandigarh.[78] Two days earlier, Rajiv Gandhi had visited Chandigarh when Congress(I) legislative party leaders had spoken of far reaching political-administrative changes in Punjab. A rumour was now afloat of a possible Congress-Akali coalition government.

It was in this background that the murder of Deputy Inspector General of Police, Jalandhar Range, Avtar Singh Atwal, outside the precincts of Golden Temple followed on April 25, 1983. The assassins fired him from the point blank range, continuously turned over his body to be sure that he was dead, and escaped in a police jeep. His security guards, and a police posse, 100 yards away, stood by. Handwritten posters on the walls in Golden Temple complex buildings, welcoming Atwal's murder, ended with 'Lal Salam' (Red Salute).[79] Obviously, these were handiwork of some Naxalites from the banned Dal Khalsa. Longowal, the following day, hinted at Darbara Singh's involvement,[80] while Bhindranwale condemned it as the "handiwork of the Punjab government."

There was hue and cry in the Hindu press. Darbara Singh early in May 1983 made elaborate arrangements to flush out 'terrorists' but was over-ruled by Indira Gandhi. Earlier, P.C. Sethi, Home Minister, made a statement threatening entry into the Golden Temple complex, but retraced it later. The government handed over a list of criminals inside the Golden Temple complex to the SGPC, but the Senior Superintendent of Police(SSP)'s letter was first shown to the wanted criminals.[81] They simply disappeared when Longowal went around checking. The list also contained a number of names who had earlier been killed in police 'encounters' or were dead or living abroad.

The only upshot of this ballyhoo was the governments' much belated move to confiscate the property of Dr. Jagjit Singh Chauhan which they should at least have done a decade earlier, and to

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prosecute Balbir Singh Sandhu, General Secretary, National Council of Khalistan. Sandhu, however, daily commuted between Amritsar and Tarn Taran but was never arrested. Sant Longowal, in a talk with Kuldip Nayar, verily described him as an agent of the Intelligence Bureau.[82]

With the question of Akali support to Congress(I) in Jammu out of the way, Indira's three pronged strategy in Punjab crystallised in May-June 1983. Firstly, the instrument of Hindu-Sikh communal rioting was used to create tension all over Punjab through the medium of Punjab *bandh*. The call was given by Hindu Suraksha Samiti headed by a Youth Congress(I) activist Pawan Kumar Sharma following massive Hindu-Sikh riots over the question of use of loudspeakers in a Gurdwara at Patiala, causing a large number of deaths, arson and looting. A number of Hindu organisations had mushroomed in Punjab[83] saying, "We are Hindus first and anything else afterwards". The ire of the Hindus fell on the Sikhs in Jammu, where they were humiliated by mobs shearing their *keshas*, sacred hair.

Secondly, Pritam Singh Bhinder, a trusted protege whose wife was Congress(I) M.P. from Gurdaspur and was closer to Bindranwale, was brought in as Inspector General of Police, Punjab, with a clear mandate to sharpen the contradictions between Bhindranwale and moderate group of Akali leadership, push the state to a general lawlessness, and strike fear in the hearts of general populace by police counter-terror. According to Chand Joshi, "On an average, the police detained 50 Sikh youths every week and shot in coldblood at least half a dozen of them."[84] The mini shake up of the senior police officers affected those who had taken tough stance towards the extremists. From now onwards, "no effort was made to round up the actual terrorists and criminals," who "continued their activities with impunity and were successful in giving the impression that they controlled the state." Further that, "Disturbances and sundry killings all over Punjab added to the pall of fear. Criminals had a free hand and a series of bank robberies occurred while government looked helplessly." Verily, amidst this repression, U.S. Ambassador to India, Harry Barnes, compared the Khalistan movement to that of Puerto Rico "where the oppressed trampled under a dictatorship were seeking liberation."[85]

Lastly, Indira called her security Adviser, Ram Nath Kao, to study Punjab situation and lay down clear guidelines for the various security agencies, including the third agency. With the help of his former deputy, Sankaran Nair, Kao made a full analysis of the situation in a fortnight and rationalised the channels of. communications.[86] With rationalisation of police and intelligence setup in mid-1983, "the pattern of violence took a decidedly sinister form." For instance, the *rail roko*, stop the trains, agitation called by Akali Dal on June 17 saw professional sabotage of rail tracks to the alarm of the moderate Akali leaders. From July 1983 onwards, there were a series of bomb explosions. Police connivance with the extremists was apparent in a number of acquittals; the beneficiaries being the banned Dal Khalsa and Dr. Chauhan's National Council of Khalistan activists. These elements were used by intelligence agencies for infiltration into terrorist and anti-social groups.[87]

On completion of a year's detention, Bhai Amrik Singh and Thara Singh were released in July 1983. It was on their arrest that Bhindranwale had started the agitation a year earlier. Chand Joshi would make us believe that the release was result of secret parleys between the central government and Bhindranwale.[88]

Bhindranwale's was a most tormented soul. The resort to shearing the *keshas* and beards of Sikhs had started in U.P. in April 1982 and then repeated ad nauseum in Haryana where it had the

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blessings of the impish Chief Minister, and lately in Jammu. This was the second. time that the Hindus posed such a problem, the earlier one being their denial of Punjabi language as their mother tongue, to which the Sikhs had no appropriate answer. The question now faced by Bhindranwale was: what sort of retaliation could be equally devastating to Hindus emotionally. Incidentally, this type of sacrilege under state auspices was revived under inspiration of Indira Gandhi after a lapse of over 200 years. It was last practised by later Mughals before the Sikhs became masters of Punjab. Had the Muslims instead of the Sikhs been the other party involved, they could possibly have put the same sort of barbers to forcibly circumcise the Hindus. That would have equally shattered them emotionally, and also possibly caused their slow death because of wounds turning septic. But circumcising the Hindus though emotionally shattering to them, would not give any emotional satisfaction to the Sikhs. Besides causing slow death by septic wound or titnus was against the Sikh tenets.

Bhindranwale must have pondered over pros and cons of various options, before he gave a call on August 17 to the Sikh youth "to give up all worldly pleasure and buy one motor cycle and a revolver" for self defence. He also stated that "Sikh Panth never teaches murder or torture of innocent people and if any body encourages these two things, he is the biggest traitor to the Panth."[89]

The Hindus ignored these type of Bindranwale's statements as against his outburst a few days earlier threatening to kill 5,000 Hindus in an hour if his mini bus - to pick up just released Bhai Amrik Singh's family members - which was detained by the police was delayed any longer. There was a beeline of mediamen from India and abroad, including foreign TV teams, correspondents from news agencies and individual newspapers and magazines, to interview Bhindranwale as if he was the sole fulcrum of the Punjab imbroglio. It ignored the fact that elements like Naxalites, criminal and antisocial elements were either controlled by the intelligence agencies, or were operating independently, and the organisations like Babbar Khalsa were opposed to him. Bhindranwale could not be the sole spokesman of the various strands operating in Punjab. But it suited the government to project him otherwise.

For the last few months, there was increasing schism between Longowal and Bindranwale over the latter's proposition to give the *morcha* a militant edge. Akali workers were also drawing closer to Bhindranwale who stated that, "The Hindus are trying to enslave us; atrocities against the Sikhs are increasing day by day under the Hindu-imperialist rulers of New Delhi; the Sikhs have never felt so humiliated, not even during the reign of the Mughal Emperors and British colonialsts. How long can the Sikhs tolerate the injustice."[90] The difference in approach came to the fore at the 'Convention of True and Honest Sikhs' held in Guru Nanak Nivas on September 3-4, 1983. In another speech on September 20, Bhindranwale said, "To be armed is the birth right of every Sikh… A Sikh without weapon is naked, a lamb led to slaughter" Further that, "Indira Gandhi is a very clever woman. She is full of double standards. . . She either wants to liquidate all the Sikhs or make them lick her *chappals*. . . Born in a Brahmin family, what does Mrs. Gandhi know about the problems of the Sikhs. She is more interested in establishing her dynastic rule than anything else."[91]

Bhindranwale had crossed the litmus test when he threatened to kill mass scale Hindus. In Indira's views, Hindus being the ruling race needed different treatment. One such incident on October 5, 1983, when a Delhi bound bus from Amritsar was hijacked at Dhilwan, passengers segregated, leading to six Hindus being shot dead and one injured, caused dismissal of Darbara Singh government and imposition of President's rule the following day. Bhindranwale said, "Six

Hindus are killed and the Government has fallen. Two hundred Sikhs have been gunned down by police, and nothing has been done. This shows that to the Government Hindu lives are more important than Sikh lives."[92]

In retrospect, it seems to have been an engineered incident,[93] as the intelligence agencies now operating for sufficient time had reached a decisive stage to upgrade the Centre's operations in Punjab. When a similar incident occurred on November 18, of hijacking of a Punjab Roadway Bus at Moga and killing of four Hindu passengers, Bhindranwale categorically condemned the incident. The *Tribune* (Chandigarh) in its editorial of November 20, 1983, observed that the first "inescapable conclusion" was "that such acts of butchery are not sponsored by the Sikh community as a community, nor even the Akali Dal, or (as it seems now) by Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale who has condemned the killings as has Sant Harchand Singh Longowal."

With induction of President's rule, the security agencies had a freer hand, and there was a sharp increase in the number of violent incidents. For instance, the *White Paper* lists 30 violent incidents during two months proceeding imposition of President's rule on October 20. The number of such incidents during the rest of the month of October itself was the same.

Bhindranwale again crossed the litmus test on December 1, 1983, when he stated that the Hindus in the Punjab should be "prepared for the worst", if Jai Hindu Sangh's threat, asking the Sikhs to leave Rajasthan by December 5, was implemented.[94] The earlier burning of the Gurdwara at Churu in Rajasthan and Jai Hindu Sangh's threat to the Sikhs, as causes belli, were conveniently downplayed by the Members of Parliament who raised a furor over Bhindranwale's statement and wanted his arrest and prosecution. The Centre by a strategem widened the schism between Bhindranwale and Akali leaders. According to Chand Joshi, at a secret meeting with Governor Pande, who was making attempts to put an end to confrontation between the Centre and Akali Dal, Akali leaders had agreed to the arrest of Bhindranwale, provided the security forces did not enter the Golden Temple complex.[95] This was leaked to Bhindranwale by the security agencies who also probably preferred him the advice of his moving over to Akal Takht, *a la* Sant Fateh Singh. Accordingly, when Babbar Khalsa activists, close to Longowal, occupied Guru Nanak Niwas rooms allocated to Bhindranwale, he chose to avoid bloodshed and moved over to Akal Takht on December 16, 1983.

By end of the month, there was gradual evolution in Bhindranwale's attitude towards the issue of Khalistan. This was reflected in his statement of December 31, 1983. "Earlier", he said, "we did not ask for 'Khalistan' but had no objection to accepting it if the government offered it. Today, it is different. It is for the government to make up its mind on the question whether it wishes to remain with us or not."[96] Indira's recurring theme during the next few months was that the moderate Sikhs had lost control over the situation and were not in a position to implement any agreement that may be arrived at.

With Bhindranwale in Akal Takht, Indira was now nearer her objectives. She made up her mind for launching a full scale military invasion, war on the Sikh, with Akal Takht, supreme seat of the Sikh temporal power, within the Golden Temple complex, constituting the main target for destruction. She passed instructions to Defence Minister, Ramaswamy Venkataraman. General K. Sundarji, overall incharge of the Operation Bluestar later told Inder Malhotra that he was told by Defence Minister to prepare for the operations on January 15, 1984, the Army Day.[97] The Army had about six months time for preparations. Similar instructions were given independently to highly

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trained commandos, a secret outfit of RAW at Chakrata; they had a large replica of the Golden Temple complex for practical exercises at Chakrata and Sarasawa near Saharanpur. They also started making reconnaissance of the Golden Temple complex.[98]

Meanwhile, Indira lulled the Akali leaders through intensified but sham negotiations and as many as seven secret meetings starting January 24, 1984, and the last one on May 26, 1984, a few days before the start of actual operations, were held.[99]

Indira by her guile and craftiness had pushed the Sikhs to a position wherefrom she could enact a ghastly tragedy.

By the time what struck observers was her new religiosity, and her catering to her new constituency - the upper caste. Hindu chauvinists, vis a vis Harijans, Muslims and other minorities.[100] In the words of Richard Nations by visiting scores of prominent Hindu temples and talking of rights of majority, she gave a new content to the notion of secularism. She was playing upon the morbid fears of intrusion and disintegrations of Hindu society.[101] The theme, Indira in a Hindu role stuck, so much so that she was being publicly upbraided by her friends like C. Rajeshwara Rao, General Secretary of CPI for becoming a 'Hindu communalist'.[102] CPM, however, kept mum about Indira's Hindu role.

Harkishan Singh Surjeet closely associated with Congress-Akali talks since November 1982 and having close liaison with both Indira Gandhi and Tohra had developed a new understanding of Indira's motivations of making moderate Akali leadership irrelevant in Punjab. Surjeet saw in that a great opportunity for Marxists to come up as a major force and establish their stronghold in Punjab, *a la* Bengal. The later reports about KGBs feeding false information about Pakistani deployment of 300,000 forces in Kashmir, mainly Punch-Rajauri sector in Jammu, and Kargil in Ladakh in April-May 1984,[103] to ensure that Operation Bluestar remains on, is to be seen in that light. It is another matter that CPM's ambitions of emerging as the dominant political factor in the Punjab after the Operations Bluestar has not been realised. That constitutes its greatest disappointment. It continues to colour its reading of the political situation in the Punjab.

Indira, however, did not need promptings from KGB to go ahead with the Operation Bluestar. After conveying orders to the armed forces in January 1984 to make preparations, the D-day had to be fixed. Since the objective was to inflict maximum damage to the Sikhs, it had to be a religious festival. The *Baisakhi*, April 13, with main celebrations at Anandpur Sahib was not suitable. The next date could be Guru Arjan Dev's martyrdom anniversary, June 3. That seemed ideal and was chosen. Meanwhile, she went ahead complicating the Punjab situation to justify, if that was needed, her war against the Sikhs all over Punjab, including the shrines and places that had no connection with Bhindranwale.

Mention has already been made of Indira's holding secret talks with Akalis to lull them to their destruction. The moderate Akali leaders, basically functioning within constitutional framework and peaceful agitation, had great limitations. They were no match to wily Indira and her cohorts. There was yet what proved to be the last round of all-party talks that took place on February 15, 1984. Akalis had earlier called for a peaceful bandh on February 8. The Hindu Sanghathan's Punjab bandh, a week later, was marred by violence against the Sikhs in Punjab, Himachal Pradesh and Haryana from February 15 to 20. The connivance of authorities in Haryana in violence against the Sikhs in Panipat and Jagadhari was explicit. Akalis called off the talks but still advocated peaceful

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Hindu-Sikh relations. Bhindranwale was for retaliation because the situation had gone beyond the limits. This resulted in sporadic incidents of violence in Punjab, and was a welcome development for Indira government.

In order to completely rout Akalis in the eyes of the opposition parties, Indira threw a bait to them to go in for an agitation for amendment of article 25 of the Constitution. It clubbed the Sikhs alongwith Jains and Buddhists to fall within the mischief of Hindus religious institutions. That was a ruse, in a very subtle way. Rajiv Gandhi conveyed to Tohra that the government would accept the demand once it was agitated.[104] Akalis non-challantly fell into the trap and announced boycott of biennial elections to Rajya Sabha, foolishly gifting one seat to Congress(I). Anyhow, that was not a big loss, keeping in view the quality of their members - Tohra, Talwandi in Rajya Sabha - who were most ill equipped and seldom opened their mouth.

After moderates announced their decision to burn article 25 of the Constitution at Delhi on February 27, 1984, they waited in vain for the government announcement. Obviously, the government wanted to tarnish Akali image in the eyes of the opposition. Badal burnt article 25 in Bangla Sahib Gurdwara, Delhi, while Tohra did so in Chandigarh. The government accepted the demand as agreed to between Rajiv and Tohra, on March 30, which it could have done on February 26, a day before the planned Akali demonstration. It was a pyrrhic victory.

Meanwhile, the AISSF was banned on March 19, and a hunt started all over Punjab to haul up its members. The same day a case of sedition against Sant Longowal was registered for having addressed a letter to the Commonwealth Heads in November last. Longowal termed the ban as an "attack on Sikhism" and also "unconstitutional, shameful and diabolical". Bhindranwale said that it "was a challenge to the Sikhs and such government designs may constrain the Sikhs to adopt a path leading to the formation of 'Khalistan'."[104a] The *Tribune* and the *Hindu* termed the ban ill conceived and counter productive.

Bhindranwale knew that the die was cast and now started fortifications. General Jagjit Singh Aurora who visited Golden Temple complex a couple of times in the first half of 1984 later affirmed that the fortifications came up only during March-June 1984. It was herein that expert knowledge of Maj. Gen. Subeg Singh, who had organised Mukti Bahini during the 1971 Bangladesh crisis, came handy. General Subeg Singh after his unceremonious exit from the army, the charges being later dismissed by appropriate court, had turned towards religion. He drew closer to Bhindranwale and served as his military adviser.

The other senior army officer, Maj. Gen. (Retd) Jaswant Singh Bhullar had a different work plan. He ingratiated himself with Bhindranwale, obtained a letter from him and left for USA in the last week of May: at the instance of Indira Gandhi, Punjab Congress(I) leader Tarlochan Singh Riyasti oversaw Bhullar's travel from the Golden Temple, Amritsar, to Delhi to catch the international flight. He was suitably briefed.

By the time, the Third Agency was in full control. It was creating a situation in which massive central operations could be seen to be justified. It was dumping army weapons, brought in *kar seva* trucks, in Harimandir to bring about a confrontation. The systematic burning of 38 railway stations on April 15 was handiwork of that agency. So were many of the much publicised killings including internecine warfare between various groups which too claimed the life of Surinder Singh Sodhi, Bhindranwale's right hand man. The government drew appropriate lessons from BSF's

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laying of siege at three Gurdwaras in Moga and imposition of curfew when thousands of the Sikhs from the neighbouring areas marched 'to free the gurdwaras'. That ended in BSF-fiasco in third week of April. Amidst the ongoing confrontation, Bhindranwale told the Janta Party delegation on April 28, 1984, that he was against Khalistan.[105]

Akali workers arrested in connection with Article 25 agitation were released on May 11, but the killing of Ramesh Chandra, Editor of Hind Samachar group and son of Jagat Narain the following day, came as an anti-climax. The declaration of Sant Longowal on May 23, for non-cooperation movement, including non-payment of land revenue, charges for canal waters, loans and electricity bills, and stoppage of foodgrains movement out of Punjab from June 3, 1984, was irrelevant, as Indira by the time had already fixed the Operation Bluestar around that time.

G.K.C. Reddy tells us that Information and Broadcasting Minister, H.K.L. Bhagat, had called editors of Delhi newspapers individually one month before the action, seeking full support in case of a 'strong action'.[106] Already, the media had helped to build up the national hysteria against the Sikhs; Akashvani (All India Radio) and Doordarshan (TV) had become Indira Vani and Indira Darshan while the 'national' press "betraying Hindu communal attitude" had overplayed Sikh terrorism, without trying to investigate as to who was behind it. It did not report "the terrorism of police, the CRPF, the BSF and later the army".[107] Indira wanted to make it a big affair to enable her to derive maximum electoral advantage in elections by end of the year. CRPF and BSF were deliberately allowed to be discredited to legitimise the final use of the armed forces. And, it was a full scale war reminiscent not of Lord Dalhousie's declaration of war on the 'Sikh Nation' 135 years earlier, but that of Ahmad Shah Abdali in 1762, 222 years ago.

Indira met President Zail Singh on May 30, 1984, and talked about new formulae on Punjab. Zail Singh even on June 4 talked of army's surrounding the Gurdwaras to pressurise 'terrorists' to come out and said that the army would not go in.

The Army Chief was asked to mobilise on May 25. All important Gurdwaras all over Punjab including the Golden Temple complex were surrounded by the armed forces by May 30. Briefing the troops, commanders used the terms "enemy" for the Sikhs all over Punjab. Bhindranwale had the exact information of arrival of 100,000 Indian troops at Halwara airport near Ludhiana, and their spread out all over Punjab to start military action on June 5. He said on June 1, that the day the armed forces enter the Golden Temple will mark the foundation of Khalistan.

As a probing mission, BSF, CRPF, and ITBP fired at the Golden Temple complex without provocation on June 1 for 8 hours from 12.40 to 20.15 hours, killing 11 people and injuring many. 3 6 bullets hit the golden dome of the Golden Temple. A 32 hour curfew was clamped from 2100 hours. *Singh Sahiban* of the Golden Temple, Giani Kirpal Singh and Giani Sahib Singh termed it as an invasion of the Golden Temple by *dushats*, wicked people, and called for their liquidation. Sant Longowal made futile efforts to talk to Zail Singh who warded off the calls.

Harbir Singh Bhanwar mentions in his diary of June 2, that it was generally known in informed circles by that time that the government had decided on a general massacre of the Sikhs in Punjab, to turn it into another Assam and that every Sikh found near the Golden Temple would be put to death.[108] The same night, Indira addressed the nation saying that Punjab had been handed over to the armed forces and the Governor of Punjab appointed as Administrator of Chandigarh. She gave an ultimatum to the Sikhs "to accept the framework of settlement the government has

outlined" but gave no warning of the impending catastrophe, to permit exit of innocent persons from the Golden Temple or other shrines. The whole of Punjab had become a trap for the Sikhs. Longowal rejected the appeal-cum-ultimatum.

Because of Guru Arjan Dev's martyrdom anniversary on June 3, curfew was relaxed from 9 to 11 and 17 to 21 hours. According to Mark Tully of BBC, the temple was unusually crowded. Balbir Singh Sandhu puts the figures at 10,000. Some of the extremists escaped before the curfew was reclamped. A number of journalists including Subhash Kirpekar and Harbir Singh Bhanwar met Sant Bhindranwale in the evening. (Mark Tully had met him a day earlier). To a question whether he supported creation of Khalistan, Bhindranwale said, "I never opposed it; nor have I supported it." To another question he stated that the Sikhs "can neither live in nor with India. If treated as equals, it may be possible. But frankly speaking, I don't think it is possible," Further that, "The Sikhs are slaves in India, and we have to cut those chains of slavery.[109]

Bhindranwale's disclosure to the journalists that he had learnt from reliable sources that the army would start its operations on June 5, shocked Harmindar Singh Sandhu and brought in him an element of realism. At night, there was no light in the Golden Temple complex. Taking advantage of darkness, a number of extremists of Babbar Khalsa and Akhand Kirtni Jatha, and recently created Akal Force escaped through the back lanes.

By the evening of June 3, 1984, Punjab was subjected to worst type of curfew of a most savage kind. It amounted to more than martial law with all sorts of restrictions; it being cut off from the rest of India. There was complete stoppage of all communications - rail, airways, buses, tractors, cars, bullock carts, cycles and even movement on foot. Nothing, except air, on which Indira had no control, moved in Punjab without government permission. Blanket ban on uncensored reporting in media and curfew was kept throughout the period army action was at its peak. This scenario had all the similarities of a war waged by a tyrannical authority against an alien people who were subjected to violence and reign of terror in violation of all civilised laws, national or international. Major General Ranjit Singh Dayal was appointed Defence Adviser to the Governor. The Press in Punjab and Chandigarh was subjected to pre-censorship, not to publish anything about army or para military forces operations. Telex and telephone lines were cut. Borders with Pakistan were sealed by the army. The trains and communications infrastructure was used only for troops movement.

The eerie silence of June 4 morning was broken by the first big bomb which, according to Longowal, fell on Akal Takht. Side by side there was burst of army's gun firing aimed at extremists' positions atop Ramgarhia Bunga and water tank behind Teja Singh Samundri Hall. The extremists returned the fire by light machine guns (LMGs). The damage was repaired by the evening and defences strengthened. Army units moved to dislodge extremists from residential houses around the Golden Temple complex. In pitched battles, about 100 people died from both sides. Tohra, with army's blessings, made last ditch efforts to persuade Bhindranwale to surrender but was rebuffed. The foreign journalists and Indians working for foreign media were made to leave the Punjab. The milk vendors who came from villages to supply milk to the city were shot dead for violating the curfew orders. That was portent of things to follow, as to the sort of treatment for civilians devoted to the Sikh faith. The aroused Sikh consciousness could make atleast 300,000 villagers from all over Punjab to violate the curfew and march on Amritsar to face the army.

The army's shelling of buildings in the Golden Temple complex started in the morning of June 5. Army commanders also repeatedly used hailers asking for surrender of the people, who got

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no opportunity 7 to move. Tohra and Longowal sent Bhan Singh, Secretary, SGPC to negotiate the coming out of 2,000 persons gathered in the Golden Temple complex for Akali *morcha*. By the time he contacted the army units, firing had started. He hastily retraced his steps barely saving his life.

As the clock struck 1900 hours, Indian army's war on the Sikhs in Punjab began with all its fury. Various Gurdwaras in Punjab were subjected to simultaneous attack. The *White Paper* mentions of 42 places of worship attacked, but some accounts mention their number at 74, and Bhindranwale was not connected with most of them. Fierce fighting took place in Moga and Mukatsar, while there was moderate resistance at Faridkot, Patiala, Ropar and Chowk Mehta. The main battleground was Amritsar.

The first task was to blast off the tops of two Ramgarhia Bungas and the water tank. Since the Golden Temple complex was surrounded by the Sikh houses and bazars, army had no compunctions in using artillery fire to cause maximum damage. By 2230 hours, two groups of commandos entered the Golden Temple complex, and Zail Singh informed of the army action. The first forces, despite tank coverage, failed to clear their respective areas for a joint action. The Tanks had to hammer repeatedly the steel gates at the Serai-entry side for operations by the 26 Madras which could not make conjunction with the 10 Guards. The RAW's Special Frontier Force which had rehearsed thoroughly, despite bullet proof jackets, failed to break into Akal Takht. The troops of Madras and Kumaon regiments got mixed up. The Madrasis were 5 hours late, and straightaway started firing on Brigadier A.K. Dewan's Garhwalis, killing about 50 Jawans before the things were sorted out.[110]

The infantry was facing stiff challenge and Gen. Subeg Singh's placing LMGs nine inches above the *Parikarma* floor made crawling impossible. RAW's Estt-22, especially equipped, could not get any closer to Akal Takht despite use of chemical gas canisters, in violation of international conventions. The use of prohibited gas did not yield the desired results because of stiff breeze and heavy sand bagging of windows and entrances. They asked for Tank support. After seeking Indira's approval, APCs and seven of the army's main battle tank, Vijayanta, were brought within the Golden Temple complex in early hours of June 6. Another 20 tanks were stationed in strategic positions. The lead APC was knocked out by the Chinese made Rocket Propelled Grenade tender (RPG-7). Hence, all the seven Vijayanta used their 105 mm main guns to fire at Akal Takht with devastating results."' The Golden Dome was damaged and Akal Takht almost completely destroyed. So was the case with *Darshani Deori*, entrance gate, of the Golden Temple. The infantry assault led by Madras regiment to capture Akal Takht met stiff resistance and it suffered 80 per cent loss. At about 11 a.m., a group trying to escape from Akal Takht to the Golden Temple was mowed down. Room to room fighting continued till 1230 hours, but resistance continued from basement and ground floor of Akal Takht. Curfew was relaxed in Amritsar city between 1500-1700 hours.

Across the road three battalions combed the adjoining *serais* "with ruthless efficiency fuelled by total anger". In the words of Chand Joshi, "Army units acted in total anger and unwittingly shot down all suspects rounded up from Golden Temple complex."[112] They used stunner grenades and at about one o'clock in the morning reached Teja Singh Samundri Hall to evacuate the moderate Akali leaders. The government later used the word "surrender" as if it were like surrender of Pakistani armed force and civilians in eastern sector in 1971! The Akali leaders were not fugitives and not wanted in any criminal cases. It only reflected Indira's mental framework of an all-out war against the Sikhs.

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The armed forces killed in cold blood a large body of peaceful Sikhs in the Golden Temple complex and outside, during the operations, in violation of all norms of national or international laws including the Hague and Geneva Conventions. Some of the instances were widely reported by various journals.

* According to Bhan Singh, Secretary, SGPC, about 250 people came out of Teja Singh Samundari Hall at the time Akali leaders were being taken into custody. A grenade was thrown by the soldiers; they started shooting wildly till Longowal came out and shouted at the Major, 'Don't shoot these people. They are not extremists. They are employees of SGPC'. 70 people, including 35 women and 5 children were killed.[113] The *White Paper* glosses over army's killing of them.
* Again, when Bhan Singh contacted the army Major on June 6, at 0830 hours to seek medical assistance for the injured, "I saw about 35 or 36 young Sikhs lined up with their hands raised above their heads and the Major was about to order them to be shot. When I asked him for medical help, he got up into rage, tore my turban off my head and ordered his men to shoot me. I turned back and fled jumping over bodies of the dead and injured and saved my life crawling along the walls. I got to the room where Tohra and Sant Longowal were sitting and told them of what I had seen. S. Karnail Singh Nag who had followed me also narrated what he had seen as well as the killing of 35 to 36 young Sikhs by canon fire."[114]
* Mark Tully narrates Manbir Singh's account of Kumaon Regiment's rescuing people on the morning of June 6, from Guru Ram Das serai. About 150 persons "were asked to hold up their hands and then they were shot after fifteen minutes." Other youngmen were told to untie their turbans. These were used to tie their hands behind their backs. "The army hit them on the head with butts of their rifles."[115] These persons also must have been killed.
* Subhash Kirpekar who was one of the last journalists to interview Bhindranwale, writing of June 6 afternoon, said, "On the way back to the hotel, I witnessed a scene at the Kotwali which is blood curdling. This is where some Jawans were kicking some of the 11 suspected terrorists as they knelt on their bare knees and crawled on the hot road surface. . . . The hundreds of spectators who saw this incident felt anguished. The sight put them off."[116]
* Giani Chet Singh, former Head Priest, Golden Temple, inter alia, gave a graphic account of atrocities to which the residents of areas around the Golden Temple were subjected. The people were taken out of their houses. Men's hands were tied with their turbans. Women's necks were sought to be asphyxiated with their plaits. Then they were shot in the chests. No quarter was shown to women, aged or children; in the eyes of troops every Sikh was a terrorist. Those who survived died of thirst. Their houses were ransacked, and then put to fire. The areas surrounding Darbar Sahib was full of debris. "What has happened is beyond description of sight, hearing or words. The Indian troops have outdone the atrocities committed by Abdali."

Verily, in the words of G.K.C. Reddy, "Thus the Operation Bluestar will go down in history as one of the biggest massacres of unarmed civilians by the organised military force of a nation." Further that, "The word 'unarmed' is used deliberately as the disparity in arms on the two sides was so great that those resisting army invasion of the Temple could hardly be termed armed."[117] In short, General Dyer was out-Dyred, and he must be turning in his grave.

How did Bhindranwale die? There is some direct evidence to suggest that Bhindranwale and Gen. Subeg Singh died of treachery.

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The report by Anshu Swaraj in the *Probe India* of July 1984 seems nearer the truth. Of the 35 extremists who had taken position in the Golden Temple, three crawled over to Akal Takht, about 40 meters away. They must have done so with the approval, if not at the instance, of the army. They pleaded with Bhindranwale and the group there to give up and surrender. There was said to be difference of opinion: this culminated in extremists fighting among themselves! It was in this short but bloody battle that Bhindranwale was gravely wounded and Gen. Subeg Singh killed.

The *White Paper* in corroboration says that "room to room engagement commenced. Some extremists were then observed rushing down towards the first and ground floors, where shortly thereafter an explosion took place and a fire started. The troops also heard an exchange of fire among the extremists themselves in the ground floor and in the basement."[118] Further on, it speaks of surrender by 200 terrorists including 22 from the Golden Temple. It seems that the group from the Golden Temple where Harminder Singh Sandhu was located, first surrendered and thereafter some from that group 'crawled' to the basement of Akal Takht to persuade Sant Bhindranwale to surrender, and failing that finish them off. This group in Golden Temple atleast must have consisted of infiltrators and agents of intelligence agencies. Union Home Secretary's statement that Bhindranwale was killed by Babbar Khalsa was misreading of the character of the elements involved. Even General Dayal contradicted Home Secretary's version.[119]

Army circles gave out that Sant Bhindranwale did not have God's word on his lips at the time of his death. His last words were, "Tell her (Indira), she is daughter of a bitch." According to some reports, Sant Bhindranwale, critically injured, was alive when captured. The army authorities sought instructions from Delhi whether to render him medical assistance, or finish him off. It took Army Headquarters six hours to obtain orders from Indira to follow the latter course. He was tortured and died defiantly.

The victory of the armed forces over the Golden Temple, Amritsar, caused wild jubilation amongst the Hindus all over northern India. It gave fulfilment to atavisitic feelings of Hinduism's victory over Sikhism. It had its reverberations in Hindus of north Indian origin across the world.[120]

The army units in Amritsar were feted by the Hindus and this went on all over Punjab.

The Sikh opinion throughout was gravely disturbed at this sacrilege which, more than anything else, signified that they had no place in India and could subsist only at the sufferance of the Hindus, shorn of their dignity and self-respect, if not face extermination. Admitted, Gurdial Singh Dhillon, who had served as Congress's cat's paw against the Sikhs, the Hindu-Sikh relations were reduced to a mere formality.

The Sikhs rose in strength in Amritsar and Gurdaspur districts and areas especially west of Beas at this grave sacrilege. Mark Tully mentions of rise of angry Sikhs from villages near Amritsar on the night after Golden Temple was surrounded and their being dispersed in Sultanwind area by the army after using tanks.[121] Shekhar Gupta talks of large mobs gathering near Verka and Gollwad near Jhabal, 25 kms from Amritsar, and large crowds around villages Dhandkesali, Fatehpur Rajputan, and around Batala in Gurdaspur district.[122] With every hour there was increase in mob fury and according to an army officer, "each successive mob that we encountered was more furious and required greater use of force. Now there is a limit to which you can use force against a crowd. After all, you can't use artillery against them and kill *lakhs* of people."[123] That is, the people according to the army officer were killed in thousands! Harbir Singh Bhanwar mentions of the Sikhs

coming from the countryside in hundreds of thousands in Raja Sansi, Ajnala, Nawankot, Tarn Taran and other places outside Amritsar, when armed forces used guns to kill as many Sikhs as they could.

Besides, helicopter-borne reconnaissance patrols scoured the countryside and hundreds of wireless sets all over Punjab repeated alarming messages from the police chief asking all officers to "shoot at sight anyone seen on the streets and at once fire at the mobs."[124]

It was in this melee of hatred and destruction, that the army at first ransacked the Sikh Reference Library in the Golden Temple complex. As Buta Singh told Giani Kirpal Singh on July 9, 1984, the army had taken away 125 bundles of Library records and books to Amritsar Cantonment.[124a] Thereafter, the army in a deliberate and a calculated move wantonly put it to fire on June 7; it contained thousands of rare manuscripts and handwritten *Hukamnamahs* of the Gurus. Similarly, Teja Singh Samundri Hall and other buildings in the Serai were put to fire. It also engulfed some of the nearby houses. The *Toshakhana*, treasure house, of the Golden Temple was systematically looted, reminiscent of Mahmud Ghazni's plunder of the Hindu temples. Other Gurdwaras, all over Punjab, were similarly pillaged by the Indian army.

How many people died in Operation Bluestar? It may be kept in view that Operation Bluestar had two components - Operation Metal confined to the Golden Temple complex and Operation Shop, to raid extremist hideouts all over the state, and mop up terrorist remnants in the countryside.

The government did not deliberately keep a proper account of the number of civilians killed and instead used sweepers and Municipal garbage trucks to cremate the bodies. Apart from Rum and monetary incentives, Sweepers were permitted to retain personal belongings including money, watches, gold bangles, etc. found on the persons of the dead. This was in violation of Geneva and Hague conventions. Even the injured who were taken to local hospital and kept in a site with a board "prisoners of war" (POWs) outside were not given facilities normally offered to POWs. Similarly, POWs kept in Amritsar Cantonment were harshly treated and many of them shot in cold blood. In short, the treatment given out to Pakistani POWs after 1971 war was much humane than that given to the Sikh POWs after Indira's Sikh war of June 1984. The government also falsified the number of troop casualties.

In view of the general resort to falsehood by the government, one has to broadly guess the total loss of civilians during the Operation Bluestar, say from June 3 to 7, 1984.

Chand Joshi was nearer the truth when he said that 700 troops and 5,000 civilians died in the Golden Temple complex.[125] Another 1000 Sikh youth must have been killed by the army and the para military forces in Amritsar city in mass scale destruction of buildings surrounding the Golden Temple complex, and shooting down of Sikhs looking out of their windows and doors within the walled city during the curfew period. The number from the Sikh crowds from Amritsar and Gurdaspur districts, especially west of Beas killed by troops could vary between 10,000 to 30,000. Of the 42 Gurdwaras raided according to the *White Paper*, 2,000 people each must have been killed at Moga and Mukatsar; 1250 each at Faridkot. Patiala, Ropar and Chowk Mehta; and an average of 500 each at the other gurdwaras. Adding another 12,000 persons who would have come out of their houses in violation of curfew all over Punjab, and who were sighted by helicopters and shot by trigger happy police, between 100,000 to 120,000 Sikhs died in five days, June 3-7, in the Operation

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Bluestar. Army atrocities, however, continued beyond June 7, as was demonstrated in firing with tanks on the Sikhs congregating on Amritsar in the next few days.

The desertion of 4,000 Sikh soldiers from different parts of India constituted high water mark of the Sikh reaction to the government's severest censorship at its atrocities in Punjab. On June 7, some 600 soldiers of the Sikh Regiment in Sri Ganganagar deserted; some of them escaped to Pakistan. This was followed by desertions in the Sikh Regimental Centre, Ramgarh in Bihar on June 10, involving 1461 soldiers - 1050 of them being raw recruits. Then there were desertions in the Sikh regiments in Jammu, Punjab Regiment at Pune, and other places including Thane, Silchar, Siliguri, and Alwar. Though it represented failure of command, government unnecessarily tried to bring in extraneous factors, such as inspiration from Pakistan which was rejected by the Court Martial.

Similarly, because of extreme provocation from Indian-Ambassador-designate to Norway, a Punjabi Brahmin, who simplified Sikh losses in the Operation Bluestar to 2-3 kg of gold plating, and his assertion that the world would go by the media coverage which was in control of the government, Harinder Singh Khalsa, Charge d' Affairs in Oslo resigned from the Indian Foreign Service in protest against Operation Bluestar. The first news given about Harinder's misappropriation of funds was found untrue; the Ambassador-designate was let off with a warning, after expressing regrets. The External Affairs Ministry, cancelled postings of all Sikh employees to the Western countries, and kept them on the tap for a sufficient time before resuming normal operations.

The resignation earlier of Simranjit Singh Mann from the Indian Police Service and his letter to President Zail Singh putting in its perspective the import of the fast moving events had its echo in the national and international media. He hit the nail on the head when he wrote, "Mrs. Gandhi, your Prime Minister, has, by this cruel action outdone Mahmud Ghazni, and she like Shankaracharya, who eliminated the Buddhist faith in India, has, by this action, achieved a dubious reputation, though to the Hindus she has become the greatest Hindu leader since Shankaracharya." Mahmud Ghazni was known as *Ghazi* to Muslims of his day and is treated as scourge by Hindus to this day. So would go down Indira with the Sikh people for times to come. Indira, verily, as we shall see later, wanted to achieve elimination of Sikhism as a vibrant faith during her lifetime, surpassing Hitler's persecution of the Jews.

Indira's healing touch was a misnomer. It was more of sprinkling salt over the open wounds. Even the children ranging from 2 to 16 years held during the Operation Bluestar were not released till Kamladevi Chattopadhaya approached the Supreme Court later in September.

The Operation Woodrose was complementary to the Operation Bluestar in scanning the Sikhs in the countryside. The army in *baat cheet*, talking points, simply laid down that an *amritdhari*, baptised, Sikh was a *potential* terrorist. The *baat cheet* un-abashedly declared Guru Gobind Singh to be the fountainhead of the Sikh militancy and virtually declared war on him. This was for the third time in the history of the Sikhs that such a decree of mass annihilation was issued. The first decree to kill worshippers of Nanak - the Sikhs - was issued by Emperor Bahadur Shah (1707-12) and was repeated by Emperor Farrukh Siyar (1713-19). Now, the Government of India made a distinction between the Sikhs of Guru Gobind Singh and others, as it had effectively used *patit*, renegade, Sikhs in the Operation Bluestar. Also, Guru Gobind Singh had been persona non grata to M.K. Gandhi, later acclaimed father of "our nation," who had described him as 'a misguided patriot', and had

otherwise till his death carried on a campaign against the Sikhs maintaining *keshas* and keeping *kirpans*.

During the Operations Bluestar and Woodrose, one wearing *kesari* turban was summarily shot at, while the one wearing blue turban and keeping *kirpan* could in certain circumstances save his life after giving up both. Honour of no Sikh was safe. It counted for nothing.

The Sikhs keeping *keshas* especially became victim of wide witchhunt for the armed forces with youth especially between 15 to 35 years coming for searching inquisitions. The army combed each and every village and town, and with the help of known Congressites, BJP and CPM activists rounded up all the Sikhs active in community services in local Gurdwaras, besides activists of Akali, Dal. Many were summarily shot: and a lot of them got indicted| because of generations old enmities. In the words of Sanjeev Gaurl "The army arrested fewer terrorists and more innocent Sikhs during mopping up operations. The army indiscriminatingly raided Sikh homes in the villages, abused their family members and took into custody young people. . . Said a police officer, 'Sikhs in Punjab villages today hate the army. (It) really let loose a reign of terror'. Go to any Punjab village and they have those sad and tragic stories to narrate to you."[126]

The author's enquiries in end-1984 revealed that during the first four to six weeks of Operation Woodrose about 100,000 youth had been taken into custody, and many of them were not heard of again: and about 20,000 belonging to third generation after independence escaped to Pakistan. That was having very adverse repercussions on the Sikh perception of the armed forces as a force of occupation and a vehicle of oppression. The army and the para military forces were breeding terrorism, which was natural reaction to tyranny.[126a] The government's oppressive intentions were clear by promulgation of National Security Act Ordinance on June 22, 1984, and Terrorist Affected Areas Ordinance on July 14, 1984. This was precursor of Terrorist and Disaffected Areas Act.

The Operation Bluestar constituted a watershed in the Sikh history and deeply hurt the Sikh psyche. It also affected other minorities who felt that if this can be done to the Sikhs, they could be the next target. Khushwant Singh and following him a number of other Sikhs, *a la* Rabindranath Tagore in 1919, renounced their Padam Bhushan/Shri and other awards. Amarinder Singh, Congress(I) M.P. and closer to Indira, resigned from Parliament and the Party. Another Congress(I) M.P. Devinder Singh Garcha resigned from Parliament but not the Party. There was a sharp reaction in the Sikhs in foreign countries. A Human Rights sub-committee under American Senator Gus Yatron was set up to look into human rights violations. Indira was vigilant as to the happenings. Maj. Gen (Retd) Jaswant Singh Bhullar, had taken over as Secretary General of the World Sikh Organisation, established in New York on July 28, to provide the Government of India access to all what was happening at international level on Sikhism, and to subvert the Sikh movement from within.

The government sought to spread disinformation and misinformation surpassing Goebbles in the process. The statement of the Army Chief, A.S. Vaidya and other senior Generals that no harm was caused to the Golden Temple and Akal Takht, was in sharp contrast to ocular evidence. The TV news on June 11, giving details of arms seized from the Golden Temple complex mentioned of a rocket launcher and two medium machine guns among others. But these did not find mention in the *White Paper*. It starts with LMGs. In the words of G.K.C. Reddy, "Poised against the heavy tanks and armoured vehicles and the heavy guns of the Indian army, these would

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appear as toys."[127] Similarly, the *White Paper* mentions of Maj. Gen. Subeg Singh having a walkie-talkie in his hand, but mentions of no one else having that to receive or pass on orders. Subeg Singh was also mentioned as having been sacked from the army, but no mention was made of the fact that he was acquitted by appropriate court of all the charges against him. The media indulged in unjustified character assassination of Bhindranwale, Subeg Singh and others in order to justify the army action. Brutalities committeed by *Jawans* were slurred over. Press Trust of India (PTI) was used to report on June 14, recovery of huge quantities of heroin, charas, hashish and foreign currency in the Golden Temple complex to show that the extremists were involved in smuggling activities. A week later, another news report denied the recovery of narcotics which, it was now disclosed, were recovered from India-Pakistan border, and not the Golden Temple complex.[128] These probably belonged to the Third Agency working directly under Indira's supervision. As for reports about women being forcibly kept in the Golden Temple complex, Inspector General Police, Punjab, Bhinder, thought them to be cooked up.

The response of media to incidents of mutiny, desertions, etc. by the Sikh soldiers was extremely irresponsible. Except for Chandra Shekhar, N. T. Rama Rao, Subramanian Swamy, opposition leaders fell into the trap of Indira, fanning the flames of Hindu chauvinism. The BJP and Lok Dal behaved like frenzied Hindu set ups. The Communist Parties toed the Moscow line, with H. S. Surjeet adopting a more balanced and critical attitude of the army action with a view to help CPM emerge as a major factor in Punjab polity. Even, Chandra Shekhar showed reluctance to criticise the army which was treated as a holy cow by all and sundry, and its brutalities befogged. One Editor told Richard Nations that the national press was giving good play to the government line "out of sympathy for the army, the last holy cow we have."[129] Special dispensation was shown to those army men killed in action in sharp contrast to 1965 and 1971 wars. In the words of Jaswant Singh of BJP it was indicative as if army had done something outside its functions and was being treated as a mercenary force.

The Indian army's continued occupation of the Golden Temple complex after successful culmination of the Operation Bluestar was not without precedent. The Sikh contingent of the British troops had continued to occupy Juma Masjid in Delhi following the failure of 1857 revolt, termed by historians as India's first war of independence. The Golden Temple complex was treated like any other conquered territory and subjected to victorious soldier's drinking and *kabab* bouts, smoking and moving with shoes on within the precincts of sanctum sanctorum as a normal routine. The visit of Giani Zail Singh on June 8, and innumerous visits of Buta Singh only helped to demarcate inner sanctum sanctorum wherefrom troops were prohibited from smoking or entering with shoes on.

Some of the VIP visitors like H.K.L. Bhagat and later Indira herself headed a group of slanderers of Sikhism whose only purpose was to draw bizarre pleasure from the extent of damage suffered by the complex. Giani Sahib Singh was in the forefront pointing to various VIPs the misdeeds being perpetrated by the occupation army. Indira must have drawn inordinate satisfaction when Sahib Singh told her that she was the first one in history to destroy Akal Takht which had escaped destruction even at the hands of Ahmad Shah Abdali.

To Indira now, all the Sikhs, except a few acting as her *chamchas* were enemies and least trustworthy. Reflective of her new stance, as she later told Inder Malhotra, were her instructions on June 11-12, 1984, during her visit to Ladakh, to replace the detachment of the Sikh soldiers assigned to guard the helipad. That caused annoyance to the troops whose loyalty and discipline was

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questioned so brazenly.[130] To her the position of the Sikhs was only that of mercenaries. The Sikh officers and troops "for at least three years afterwards" in the words of Tavleen Singh "felt less than comfortable about their future in the army." The Sikh officers on their part found themselves being diverted into administrative rather than 'command' jobs and the feeling grew that "there were likely to be fewer and fewer Sikh Army Commanders."[131] The position of the Sikhs in civil services was not much better.

Indira, in order to pacify the Sikhs, started relay of regular *kirtan* singing of hymns, morning and evening (0430-0600 and 1700-1730 hrs) from the Golden Temple from June 8. The inauguration prayer offered stated that "whatever had happened had occurred in accordance with the will of God. Forgive, shortcomings of us all: Thou may grant thy acceptance to what was Thy *bhana*."[132]

In another week, Giani Sahib Singh decided to strike back through *gurbani*. Guru's hymns contained in *Adi Granth*. Guru Nanak's hymns against political oppression and condemnation of Babur's atrocities, Bhai Gurdas's composition on bitchy nature of rulers, and Kabir's condemnation of Brahmins arrogance, amongst others, came quite handy in keeping awake the spirit of Sikh defiance among the populace. A couple of these *shabads* were invariably sung before closure of the service over All India Radio's relay at 0600 hours. The government's protests were brushed aside. Buta Singh kept fulminating at singing of these *shabads* which did not form part of his *gutka* of *Asa di Var*, special hymns for morning service, in the Gurdwaras.

Zail Singh's reaction on June 17, putting a seal of approval on Indira's misdeeds, after spending a week in remorse, at the destruction of the Golden Temple complex, only reflected that he and his tribe of Congressite Sikhs were committed only to Nehruvian dynasty and not to the interests of the nation. Buta Singh's inability to meet the conditions of withdrawal of troops from the Golden Temple complex laid down by Baba Kharak Singh, to undertake the *kar sewa*, reconstruction of damaged shrine by the voluntary service of the community, which was in the best traditions of Sikhism, was glaring. He agreed to the army withdrawal but was overruled by Indira whose appetite had rather been whetted. Her objective now was to strike at the roots of the democratic Sikh institution, the SGPC, and overwhelm it.

Buta Singh announced the agreement of Baba Santa Singh, the opium eating head of Buddha Dal of Nihangs, who was involved in various criminal cases which were withdrawn, to undertake the reconstruction of Akal Takht at the instance of the government. The five high priests immediately warned both Buta Singh and Santa Singh.

Indira now entered into another strategem of sham talks. Army's top brass including Lt. Gen. Tirath Singh Oberoi landed in Amritsar on July 13, to negotiate about *kar seva* of the Golden Temple complex. After three days of intense negotiations, a formulae of sorts was thrown up. Akalis promised not to let arms enter the temple and to invite Baba Kharak Singh to perform the *kar seva*. While the army insisted on keeping a picket at *darshani deori*, Akalis were willing to give two rooms on the *parikarma* facing the temple to *Jawans* dressed in mufti.

New Delhi's duplicity was obvious from the fact that this period of negotiations was utilised to transport a fleet of buses of Santa Singh's Nihangs from Bhatinda, 300 kms away, guarded by Punjab Police commandos. Arun Nehru, Indira's special confidant and K. C. Pant flew from Delhi on the evening July 16, and conveyed the move to the army brass. The Generals now unabashedly

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told Akalis that Indira had decided that they were still not trustworthy, and Baba Santa Singh's gang had been brought in for the *kar seva*.

The five high priests struck immediately and issued a *hukamnamah* barring the Sikhs from participation in the *kar seva* without their sanction. Santa Singh refused summons and was immediately excommunicated from the faith. There were misgivings in the State Congress(I) circles that the move could misfire. Amarinder Singh said that "the Akal Takht constructed by the Government shall be demolished", and "If no one else does it, I would".[133] This found ready echo in the Sikh community.

Indira's sinister designs were discernible from the fact that the Union Home Ministry was now contemplating amendment of the SGPC Act to constitute a Board with government nominees on it, to manage the Sikh shrines. It was with this objective in view that New Delhi decided to convene a *Sarbat Khalsa*.

Buta Singh, following in footsteps of Zail Singh in serving as cat's paw in organising subversion of Sikh institutions, now took over the task of organising a *Sarbat Khalsa*, a meet of the whole Sikh people, which would provide a new authority to override the premier Sikh organisation, SGPC, and convert Sikh shrines into handmaids of Congress(I) politics. The *Sarbat Khalsa* had been conceived in the first half of 18th century as an institution to bring the whole body of Sikhs, then in distress, at one platform to take cumulative decisions in the best interests of the *Panth*. It had been in disuse now for over two centuries. It was now being revived in form, by malicious elements, to denigrade Sikhism, strangulate Sikh institutions and subvert Sikh identity. The *Sarbat Khalsa* convened on August 11, 1984, at Amritsar in which Buta Singh acted as the frontman of Indira, was retrogressive, pernicious and malevolent in character.

The directive from the five high priests threatening excommunication to those joining the *sarkari* (government sponsored) *Sarbat Khalsa*, kept away the Sikh saints and scholars. Only Giani Man Singh, Jathedar Patna Sahib, could be flown in BSF plane under heavy security; and he too refused to speak on any resolution. The main gathering consisted of 85 percent of *tamashbeen*, sightseeing Hindus, smoking biris and cigarettes within the panda! and lacking any devotion whatsoever. They were all mobilised with state assistance from all over Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu, Delhi, Rajastan and Western U.P. The twin objective to show that Congress(I) had hold over the Sikh masses and could control the Gurdwaras, its intrinsic desire since Nehru's days, were defeated. It rather had counter impact of regrouping of the Sikhs which made five high priests to reject all resolutions adopted at the meet, and instead call for a conference of the Sikhs from all parts of the world to give proof of their solidarity.

Despite all hurdles and virtual ban imposed upon it, the World Sikh Convention of September 1-2, was a massive show of popular Sikh sentiments. The Government's nervousness could be gauged from the fact that all entry routes to Amritsar were closed 24 hours before the convention. The Correspondents of the bi-monthly *India Today* who covered both the *sarkari sarbat khalsa* and the World Sikh Convention stated that the former "paled against the spontaneous fervour of the convention."[134] Giani Zail Singh was peeved at the considerable effectiveness of the Convention. He and Buta Singh were singled out and condemned as *tankhahiyas* (literally mercenaries) and ex-communicated from *Panth*. The government came under trenchant attack for its army action and "rampant enslavement" of the Sikh community. Whereas, Giani Kirpal Singh, headpriest of Akal Takht, accused the government "of trying to divide the Sikh community and

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enslave it", Giani Sahib Singh called upon the Sikhs "to rise against the new Aurangzebs of Delhi." The resolutions, purely religious in character, eschewed politics, and served a notice to the government to hand back the Golden Temple complex to the SGPC by October 1, 1984. Failing that the Sikh masses would assemble at Amritsar to wrest control from the government.

No mention was made of Sant Bhindranwale at the convention: he was uppermost as a martyr in the mind of the people. Intelligence reports spoke of possible rise of classical terrorism, and the couple of Bhakra Canal breaches done with an expertise was a pointer to that. A number of small militant groups styling themselves as suicidal/assassination squads had reportedly come into being[135] to kill a number of VVIPs. It was also surmised that even if the moderate Akali leadership was discredited, its place would be taken by extremist groups owing allegiance to Sant Bhindranwale to the discomfiture of Congress(I) and CPM which had hoped to fill the void.

The ultimatum of the World Sikh Convention served as a catalyst and hastened the pace of reconstruction of Akal Takht. Already Muslim craftsmen from Rajasthan and U.P., and 600 paid labour of Central Public Works Department (CPWD), National Museum and National Archives of India besides Tejwant Singh's Skippers Group, New Delhi, were hurrying up the construction work. It was complete by the end of September.

Giani Zail Singh sent a number of emissaries to the five high priests explaining his constitutional position and sought the withdrawal of the edict declaring him *tankhahiya*. He also advised Indira to relent. As she was licking her Andhra wounds and was facing onslaught from the opposition parties including the BJP and Lok Dal who favoured withdrawal of army from the Golden Temple complex, and were otherwise attacking her for the Punjab imbroglio, she decided to make a tactical retreat. She asked Zail Singh to find a solution. As a result of the goings on, a modus vivendi was arrived at. The high priests also showed a degree of pragmatism and accepted certain stipulations. Indira announced on September 25, 1984, her decision to withdraw the army and hand over the temple to the SGPC. This also meant abandoning of her earlier plans to supercede it by a government nominated Board. Baba Santa Singh hurriedly disappeared from the scene.

Zail Singh visited the Golden Temple complex the following day for the ceremony to hand over the temple, and made a highly emotional speech. In a choked voice, he said, "I ask for sincere forgiveness from the Gurus for the unfortunate incidents." He also spoke of martyrs blood shed in the complex, without specifying who were martyrs and who the tormentors.

The high priests responded by exonerating Zail Singh from indictment as *tankhahiya*. Giani Kirpal Singh warned that continuously treating the Sikhs as second class citizens would endanger the unity of the country and also cause communal disharmony. He also asked for immediate revocation of the ban on AISSF, unconditional release of AISSF and Akali leaders detained; an end to arrest of the Sikhs in Punjab and other provinces, and sufficient compensation to families hurt in the army action.

The handing over of the Golden Temple complex and other Gurdwaras in Punjab to the SGPC did not mean a change in Indira's policy. She only shied away from enacting, what could have been, a massacre of genocidal proportions on October 1, protest-march by the Sikh community on their Gurdwaras to liberate them from army's occupation. She shied away, not because she did not want to, but because of glare of adverse publicity that the attempt would

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involve, and being in adverse circumstances. She needed to make some other dramatic move, as by that time the aura of gaining Hindu votes because of the Operation Bluestar had worn thin. According to political pundits, she had little chance of gaining an absolute majority in the forthcoming elections slated for end of the year.

Indira drew a diabolical plan, named Operation Shanti, to carry out a general massacre of the Sikhs, of genocidal proportions, around November 8, when the Sikhs would assemble in various Gurdwaras for Guru Nanak's birthday celebrations. According to the plan, large scale skirmishes virtually amounting to a war, were to take place all along the India-Pakistan borders. And, it was to be given out that the Sikhs had risen in revolt in Punjab and joined hands with Pakistani armed forces which had made considerable advances into the Indian territory.[136] The Sikhs all over Punjab, especially in Gurdaspur, Amritsar, Ferozepur, Kapurthala and Jalandhar districts were to be subjected to massive aerial bombardment, apart from being slaughtered by army and para military forces. The Sikhs all over India were to be subjected to mass scale massacre, loot, arson and incendiarism by lumpen elements organised by Youth Congress(I) activists. Elaborate preparations were made by Youth Congress(I) network all over India; they were to await a coded signal to start the mayhem.

The plan was discussed with certain army generals who advised Indira against it. They pointed out that Nazis had used gas chambers to finish off the Jews, but had not been able to do so. And, her plan to finish off the Sikhs in one go would only club her name with that of Hitler. But she was unrelenting.

Meanwhile, the plan to provoke hostilities with Pakistan had leaked out to major international intelligence agencies because even top secrets in Prime Minister's secretariat were being sold for a song by personal staff of P.M.'s Principal Secretary, P.C. Alexander.[137] President Zia ul Haq made earnest attempts to ward off the war with India. He instructed his Ambassador in New Delhi, Humayun Khan, to convey directly to Indira of his great concern at the deteriorating India-Pak relations, and suggest resumption of direct talks between the two. Consequently, Humayun Khan, bypassing Indian Foreign Office, called on P.C. Alexander on October 25, 1984, to convey his President's proposals for summit level talks, without any preconditions.[138]

Indira was not receptive. In view of her nefarious Sikh genocidal plan, she paid a sudden visit to Kashmir on October 27, when, however, she got the omen of her imminent death.[139] Back in New Delhi, the following day, records Alexander, "she sent for Gen. Vaidya and asked him in my presence about the preparedness of the Indian army in J&K to meet any unexpected outbreak of trouble. General Vaidya assured her that the army was very well prepared for any eventuality and there was no danger of it being taken unawares by the Pakistanis."[140]

After General Vaidya's departure, Indira asked Alexander to fully apprise Vice President, R. Venkataraman of the developments in the Punjab and J&K, and "remain in close contact" with him for "it would be helpful to keep him fully informed of all developments and get his views on them." Alexander records, "I do not know what prompted her to give such instructions to me at that time." Alexander met Venkataraman on October 30 and apprised him of Prime Minister's "concern and fears."[141]

Indira wanted to involve Vice President from that very stage, as he was to be the acting President once Operation Shanti was operative, and inconvenient Zail Singh was bumped off.

Significantly, Zia ul Haq stated at Indira's funeral that it was with great difficulty that he had been able to avert a war with India. His then No. 2, Ghulam Ishaq Khan, after demitting the office of President of Pakistan in July 1993, stated that Indira had planned to attack Pakistan but was shot dead some ten days before the D-Day.

The omen of her imminent death weighed on Indira for the rest of her four days of life. That was uppermost in her mind when she spoke of her violent death at the public meeting at Bhubaneshwar on October 29. Later, in the evening, she broached the subject with Orissa Governor, B. N. Pandey, at the dinner table.[142] The thought lingered on, as she returned to Delhi on October 30 night. But unlike Aurangzeb who was remorseful at the 'burden of sin' he was carrying, Indira, not being religious, was unrelenting.

Beant Singh, Sub-Inspector in Indira's security, got the contours of Indira's Sikh-genocidal plan from R. K. Dhawan, Special Assistant to Prime Minister, and decided to act to thwart it. He commissioned Satwant Singh to assist him.

On October 31, 1984, at 9.00 a.m. Beant Singh with his service revolver shot Indira in the abdomen and pumped five bullets. In less than a minute, at his call, Satwant Singh emptied his automatic carbine in Indira's abdomen region. Actually, one bullet in the head would have been sufficient. But abdomen was chosen because, firstly, they had been assured that she would not be wearing her bullet proof jacket, and secondly, they did not want to hurt anyone else, which a shoot out at head might have entailed.

Beant Singh had cautioned Satwant Singh to ensure that his friend Dhawan, was not hurt in the melee. After shooting Indira, both threw down their weapons. And, Beant Singh said, "I have done what I had to do. You do what you want to do." In another six minutes, the forces behind the shootout had the two shot by Tarsem Singh Jamwal and Ram Saran of the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP). Beant Singh died immediately, while Satwant Singh managed to survive to face the hangman's noose.

Dhawan while in All India Institute of Medical Sciences where efforts were being made to resuscitate Indira, rang Prime Minister's residence a number of times, enquiring about Beant Singh and Satwant Singh. He must have been nervous at Beant's disclosing of Indira's Sikh-genocidal plan, *Operation Shanti*, as the motivating factor for his act.

What was Dhawan's motivation? Did he do that at the instance of some outside agency? Or, was it just friendship with Beant Singh and/or general indiscretion? Thakkar Commission pointed needles of suspicion towards Dhawan. The American Magazine *Newsweek* had named the outside agency possibly involved. Rajiv Government chose to ignore these, as these did not fit in its Sikh-genocidal policy. Rajiv had to pay a high price later, as a similar agency masterminded his slaughter.

Whether Dhawan or some one else was involved in shooting of Beant Singh and Satwant Singh by ITBP? Who was the man who asked ITBP men to finish off Beant Singh and Satwant Singh, killers of Indira Gandhi? Or, did they act on their own? No one has sought to go into these questions, or atleast the findings still remain highly classified. Beant Singh's death prevented the full story from coming out, and that suited the government very well.

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Beant Singh, the mastermind behind the slaying of Indira, as also Satwant Singh, were motivated by highest considerations, of the good of the *Panth*. But for their timely action, with Indira's Sikh genocidal plan, Operation Shanti, getting through, the Sikhs all over India including Punjab would have suffered immeasurable and infinite losses. What happened in Delhi and Hindi belt grievously hurting the Sikhs in loss of 12,000 to 20,000 lives, and billions of worth of property, was on a much lesser scale than originally planned.

The final reckoning of the last phase of Indira's Sikh War could have been far more severe had she been able to carry out her blitzkrieg planned around November 8. That would have enabled her goons to commit genocide of the Sikhs with downright thoroughness.

Referring to the atrocities perpetrated on the Sikhs, Hindus tauntingly said, *yad karega khalsa*, Khalsa shall remember, in parody to the Sikh litany *raj karega khalsa*, Khalsa shall rule.

Indira deliberately sowed insurrectionary seeds in the Sikh polity in order to suppress the Sikhs easily, and to justify their suppression. In the process she not only instituted killing of the Sikhs en masse, but also to inflict on them moral degradation by resort to shearing their *keshas*, inhibiting the Sikhs to do unto Hindus what was being done unto them.

Verily, 1984 was one of the worst years in the Sikh history when they suffered immense losses affecting their dignity as a people and their *charhdi kala* - loftiness of spirit - leading to fall in their self estimation. This can't go off their memory.

That was the price paid by the Sikhs for their temerity to stand up to Indira-Sanjay emergency excesses.

Right from Indira's water and hydel power Award in March 1976 to her raising Bhindranwale and introducing violence as factors in Sikh polity, through Bhindranwale's alienation from his mentors, frustration at the treatment meted out to the Sikhs and his occupation of Akal Takht, to the Operation Bluestar and after, Indira had a whipping hand, and conducted the affairs of Punjab as a circus master. The Akali leaders, operating within the parameters of the Constitution, were inherently at an unequal position. Even Bhindranwale, throughout, was only reacting to the situation he was placed in by Indira. He never had the initiative to act, much less mould the events. He was more or less a prisoner of events and acted within the parameters laid by New Delhi. He was not much aware of the moles within his establishment and the damage they were causing from within.

The Sikh leadership regarded Indira as a political factor, a dominant one, but she regarded the Sikhs simply as enemies to be defeated in detail, by all the possible avenues of statecraft and vast resources available to her. It was this difference of perception on the two sides, that played a havoc and enabled her to inflict severe losses on the unsuspecting Sikhs.

In a decade, Indira by her singleness of purpose and relentless pursuit of her Sikh war in all its ramifications, transformed the Sikh position in India, making them irrelevant as a factor in the Indian union. That affected their sense of belonging to the country and gave a new poignance to the Sikh identity. She also brought about rebarbarisation of the state administration vis a vis the Sikhs, to carry on her war to its logical conclusions.

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Before proceeding further, it would be of interest to dilate on Indira's overall legacy of a decade-and-a-half in power in two phases. She destroyed the Congress as a political institution and instead brought in wastrels or lumpen elements to the fringe of power. She brought into the politics big money, and outright buying of the people. Acquisition of wealth became the loadstar of public activity. She destroyed the independence and integrity of the judiciary, and packed the Courts with lackeys and flunkeys. She used, with deadly effect, provisions of the Constitution to destablise non-Congress governments. Booth capturing and use of force against the underprivileged became-common.

In short, she provided a legacy of complete absence of integrity, public morality and traditional values. That set the ball rolling for her son and successors.

Footnotes:

1. Inder Malhotra, *Indira Gandhi, A Personal and Political Biography*, (London, 1989), p. 78.
2. Mark Tully and Satish Jacob, *Amritsar, Mrs. Gandhi's Last Battle*, (London, 1985), p. 75.
3. The current Akali agitation against emergency was coterminous with the announcement for holding of general elections in January 1977 and withdrawal, of emergency.
4. The water allocated was as follows:

Rajasthan (non-riparian state)	8.90 MAF (Million Acre Fields)
Haryana (non-riparian state)	3.5 MAF
Delhi (non-riparian state)	0.2 MAF
Punjab (riparian state)	3.5 MAF

5. Dhillon, G. S. "The Role of Akali Dal During Emergency, (June 1975-March 1977)" *Journal of Sikh Studies* Vol. XIV, No. 2, August 1987, pp. 103-05.
6. Kuldip Nayar and Khushwant Singh, *Tragedy of Punjab: Operation Bluestar and After*, (Delhi, 1984), p. 35.
7. Indira Gandhi, *Eternal India* (English edition), (Bombay, 1980).
8. Nayar, n. 6, p. 31.
9. Cf, p. 104 ante.
10. Chand Joshi, *Bhindranwale: Myth and Reality*, (New Delhi, 1984), p. 5.
11. Tavleen Singh in Amarjit Kaur, et at., *The Punjab Story*, (1984), p. 32; also Tully & Jacob, n. 2, pp. 58-59. According to some sources, firing on the devout Sikh was let by an Inspector of Punjab Police in league with Congress(I).
12. Bhai Randhir Singh of Narangwal had been sentenced to life imprisonment in Second (Supplementary) Lahore Conspiracy Case, because of his efforts to raise a revolt in the armed forces over the question of demolition of the walls of Gurdwara Rakab Ganj. See, Sangat Singh, *Freedom Movement in Delhi*, (Delhi, 1972), p. 213.
13. *White Paper on the Punjab Agitation*, (New Delhi, Government of India, July 10, 1984), p. 40.
14. Tully and Jacob, n. 2, p. 60.
15. For Tiwari's role in foundation of Dal Khalsa, see Nayar, n. 6, p. 33.
16. Giani Zail Singh, "*Main Majboor Tha*" (I was under compulsion), *Dinman*, January 30, 1988.
17. In conversation with the author.
18. Amarjit Kaur, n. 11, p. 26.
19. Chand Joshi, n. 10, p. 6.
20. *White Paper*, n. 13, p. 38.
21. Ibid.

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22. Chand Joshi, n. 10, p. 6.
23. Surjeet Jalandhary, *Bhindranwale Sant*, (Jalandhar, 1984), p. 25.
24. Ibid, p. 39.
25. Ibid. p. 40.
26. Tully and Jacob, n. 2, p. 60.
27. Chand Joshi, n. 10, p. 105-06.
28. Ibid, p. 37.
29. Ibid, p. 44.
30. Surjeet Jalandhary, n. 23, p. 42.
31. Kuldip Nayar, n. 6, p. 36.
32. Ibid.

32a. The sort of Congress government's interference in Gurdwara affairs was obvious from the fact that the union government amended the Delhi Gurdwara Act in 1972 to provide that one must either have passed Matriculation or Giani examination to hold executive post. That was designed to disqualify Jathedar Santokh Singh. Later in 1980, the amendment was rescinded to help the same Santokh Singh to come into power.

33. It was suggested to External Affairs that a pilgrim should not be permitted to perform the next pilgrimage within two years. Later, India's Ambassador to Pakistan, K.D. Sharma, recommended restrictions for a period of 5 years for performing the next pilgrimage. The External Affairs Ministry reduced the period to two years, but did not implement it, because of pressure of intelligence agencies which were operating through small pilgrim groups from Delhi.
34. For Third Intelligence Agency, see *Surya*, September 1984, issue.
35. *The Sunday*, Calcutta, August 8, 1980, p. 39, quoted in Tully, n. 2, p. 65.
36. Kuldip Nayar, n. 6, p. 38.
37. Satinder Singh, *Khalistan: An Academic Analysis*, (Delhi, 1982), p. 114.
38. Ibid.
39. Kuldip Nayar, n. 6, p. 51.
40. Satinder Singh, n. 37, p. 55.
41. For text, see Kuldip Nayar, n. 6, p. 51. Gajinder Singh later in September was one of Dal Khalsa activists to hijack an airplane to Lahore.
42. Satinder Singh, n. 37, p. 53.
43. Kuldip Nayir, n. 6, p. 72.
44. Chand Joshi, n. 10, p. 81.
45. *White Paper*, n. 13, p. 24.
46. Surjeet Jalandhary, n. 23, p. 51.
47. *White Paper*, n. 13, p. 24.
48. Kuldip Nayar, n. 6, p. 43; Tully & Jacob, n. 2, p. 67.
49. Chand Joshi, n. 10, p. 90.
50. Kuldip Nayar, n. 6, p. 4.
51. Chand Joshi, n. 10, p. 90.
52. Ibid, p. 91.
53. Kuldip Nayar, n. 6, p. 41.
54. Partipants were: H.S. Longowal, G.S. Tohra, P.S. Badal, S.S. Barnala, and Balwant Singh: Indira Gandhi, C.R. Krishnaswamy Rao Sahib, Cabinet Secretary, P.C. Alexander Principal Secretary to P.M., and T.N. Chaturvedi Home Secretary.
55. Kuldip Nayar, n. 6,p. 44.
56. Ibid, p. 45.

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57. Participants were: same as in n. 54 above with addition of P. V. Narasimha Rao, Minister for External Affairs on government side.
58. The Spokesman Weekly, (Delhi), Guru Gobind Singh Number, 1983.
59. Participants were: same as in n. 54 above with addition of Bhan Singh, R.S. Bhatia, P.S. Oberoi and Ravi Inder Singh on Akali side, and Zail Singh and Pranab Mukherjee Ministers for Home and Finance respectively on government side.
60. Chand Joshi, n. 10, p. 99.
61. Gopal Singh (Ed), *Punjab Today*, (Delhi 1987), p. 227.
62. Cf. The Spokesman Weekly, March 12, 1985.
63. Giani Zail Singh, n. 16.
64. Chand Joshi, n. 10, p. 111.
65. *White Paper*, n, 13, p. 114.
66. Chand Joshi, n. 10. p. 58.
67. Kuldip Nayar, n. 6, p. 60.
68. Chand Joshi, n. 10, p. 119.
69. Kuldip Nayar, n. 6, pp. 62-63.
70. Participants were: P.S. Badal, Balwant Singh, Ravi Inder Singh and R.S. Bhatia: R. Venkataraman, P.C. Sethi, and Shiv Shankar Union Ministers, Amarinder Singh, M.P., P.C. Alexander, T.N. Chaturvedi.
71. They were not released till July next.
72. Another Accord was arrived at on November 18, 1982, with the assistance of Farooq Abdullah, but Indira again backed out.
73. Kuldip Nayar, n. 6, p. 55.
74. Ibid, p. 66.
75. G.K.C. Reddy (Ed), *Army Action in Punjab: Prelude & Aftermath*, (Delhi, 1984), pp. 25-26.
76. Chand Joshi, n. 10, p. 132.
77. Ibid.
78. Participants were: G.S. Tohra, P.S. Badal, S.S. Barnala, Balwant Singh Ramuwalia, P.S. Cheema: P.V. Narasimha Rao, Pranab Mukherjee Union Ministers; C.R. Krishnswamy Rao Sahib, P.C. Alexander, M.M.K. Wali, Prem Kumar.
79. Kuldip Nayar, n. 6, p. 76.
80. Precisely, Longowal said, "Whenever the situation becomes ripe for settlement, some violent incidents takes place. I think there is a government conspiracy behind the DIG's murder." When asked by a newsman, who, Longowal thought, could be behind the murder, he said, "The one who is afraid of losing his seat (of power)", meaning Punjab Chief Minister, Darbara Singh. *Indian Express*, April 27, 1983, quoted in Ghani Jafar, *The Sikh Volcano*, (Lahore 1987), p. 78. Also, Tavleen Singh, n. 11, p. 30.
81. Chand Joshi, n. 10, p. 134. As a result, 45 persons were asked to vacate various rooms.
82. Kuldip Nayar, n. 6, p. 78.
83. As Virat Hindu Parishad (VHP), a RSS front organisation, with branches all over India, because of compulsions of state politics in BJP's support to Akalis, kept a low profile, Congress (I) engineered a number of Hindu organisations, in various parts of Punjab. These being: Hindus Sanghathn at Jalandar in June 1983 with Amar Nath Vidyalankar, a veteran Congress, leader and former Minister as President, and Virendra of Pratap group as Vice President; Rashtriya Suraksha Samiti in March 1983 at Amritsar by Virendra of Pratap group of newspapers and an Arya Samajist; Rashtriya Hindu Sanghathan, Punjab, with headquarters at Amritsar, established by Surinder Kumar Billa, a Youth Congress (I) activist with himself as President; Hindu Shiv Sena established by Jagdish Tangri, a RSS-BJP activist at Ludhiana;

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Hindu Front organised by Kali Charan at Ludhiana. Of these, only Hindu Suraksha Samiti established by Pavan Kumar Sliarma on September 26, 1982 was a mass based organisation with 23 branches all over Punjab. See, Gopal Singh, n. 61, p. 204.

84. Chand Joshi, n. 10, p. 139.
85. Ibid, pp. 139-40.
86. Ibid, pp. 141-2.
87. Ibid. p. 143.
88. Ibid.
89. Ibid, p. 144.
90. Kuldip Nayar, n. 6, p. 73.
91. Ibid, p. 74.
92. Tavleen Singh in Amarjit Kaur, n. 11, p. 41.
93. Some criminals being tried for murder were released and entrusted to carry out the killings. According to an eye witness account, they after the incident prayed to *Satguru* to forgive them as they had done so under duress.
94. Ghani Jafar, n. 80, pp. 139-40.
95. Chand Joshi, n. 10, p. 149.
96. Ghani Jafar, n. 80, pp. 139-40.
97. Inder Malhotra, n, 1, p. 344.
98. Shekhar Gupta in n. 11, pp. 58-59.
99. *White Paper*, n. 13, pp. 92-93.
100. Cf. Inder Malhotra, n. 1., Chapters 15 and 16.
101. Cf. Richard Nations, "The Devil's Alternative", *Far Eastern Economic Review* (Hong Kong), July 12, 1984, pp. 24-28.
102. Inder Malhotra, n. 1, p. 259.
103. Chand Joshi, n. 10, p. 12. It was widely talked about in the corridors of power in New Delhi that Indira had discussed the Punjab situation with Mikhail Gorbachev who recalled the Soviet's facing similar situation in the Central Asian Republics in 1920s when they killed bulk of men of 15-35 years of age. This helped to firm up the soviet hold in Central Asia. That all the more firmed up Indira's resolve to go ahead with the Operation Bluestar.
104. Kuldip Nayar, n. 6, p. 84.

104a. Later, Sant Longowal said, "I can say with authority that Bhindranwale had no links with Pakistan, nor with the CIA." Interview with Kuldip Nayar, *Sunday*, March 31, 1985, p. 26.

105. Ghani Jafar, n. 80, p. 142.
106. Reddy, n. 75, p. 52.
107. Ibid, pp. 52-53.
108. As a result he left his quarters in Golden Temple complex to stay with friends outside.
109. Subhash Kirpekar in n. 11, p. 78; Harbir Singh Bhanwar's Diary of June 3, 1984.
110. *India Today* (bi-monthly). New Delhi, June 3, 1984; Tully & Jacob, n. 2, p. 162.
111. *Probe India*, (monthly), August 1984, p. 12.
112. Chand Joshi, n. 10, p. 160.
113. Tully & Jacob, n. 2, p. 169. Longowal's interview with Kuldip Nayar, *Sunday*, March 31, 1985, p. 27.
114. Statement dated June 23, 1984, reproduced by Khushwant Singh in n. 11, pp. 12-13.
115. Tully and Jacob, n. 2.
116. Cf. Amarjit Kaur, n. 11, p. 82.
117. G.K.C. Reddy (Ed), n. 75, p. 49.
118. *White Paper*, n. 13, p. 49.

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119. Kuldip Nayar, n. 6, p. 104.
120. In Kabul, Afganistan, where the author was posted at the time, Hindus despite having best of relations with local Sikhs, distributed *Halwa* and *Luchis* - typical Indian dishes - for celebration.
121. Tully and Jacob, n. 2, p. 152.
122. *India Today*, June 30, 1984.
123. In n. 11. p. 62.
124. See. n. 122.

124a. Giani Kirpal Singh had this confirmed through his staff members who saw part of the army's haul from the Library in Amritsar Cantonment. What has happened to these 125 bundles is not known. The Sikh leadership should have pursued this matter at least with the governments of V.P. Singh and that of Chandra Shekhar. Cf. Giani Kirpal Singh, *Operation Bluestar: itihas de Khooni Patre* (Pierrefonds, Canada, 1994), p. 104.

125. Chand Joshi n. 10, p. 161.
126. Sanjeev Gaur, "Punjab: One Year After", *Sunday*, June 9, 1985, p. 30.

126a. "The truth is that during such operations, the army harassed, humiliated and kept in illegal custody a larger number of innocent Sikhs, a majority of them youths from villages. Official sources disclosed to *Sunday* that the army personnel relied on mere heresay while arresting people. A majority of the Sikhs arrested and kept in custody for months by the army after Operation Bluestar were actually innocents....More reports started pouring in that innocent Sikh youths were being falsely implicated in criminal cases involving the killing of Hindus, bomb blasts and arson....All through the CRPF has been blatantly pro-Hindu and anti-Sikh. The Akali Dal has time and again demanded the withdrawal of the CRPF from Punjab." Sanjeev Gaur, "Punjab: Terrorism on the Rise", *Sunday*, June 16, 1985, pp. 32-33.

127. G.K.C. Reddy, n. 72, p. 48.
128. Ibid, pp. 54-55.
129. *Far Eastern Economic Review* July 12, 1984.
130. Inder Malhotra. n. 1, pp. 294 & 345.
131. Tavleen Singh. "The Indian Army Under Fire", *Indian Express*, (Magazine Section), October 8, 1989.
132. Harbir Singh Bhanwar's diary.
133. India Today, August 15, 1984.
134. Ibid, September 30, 1984.
135. Ibid, August 15, 1984.
136. Some one close to R.K. Dhawan, Special Assistant to Prime Minister had just been to see him. He met the author around October 22, 1984, and said that war with Pakistan was around the corner, and could take place in the first week of November 1984. He, however, agreed with the author that there was no causes belli for the war at the time. The author got the contours of Indira's nefarious Sikh-genocidal plan in second half of November 1984.
137. Despite his being privy to selling national secrets, or because of it, he was rewarded with High Commissionership in London, and later with Governorship of Tamil Nadu etc.
138. P.C. Alexander, "My Years with Indira Gandhi, XII", *Economic Times*, Delhi, October 22, 1990.
139. Inder Malhotra, n. 1 p. 304.
140. P. C. Alexander, n. 138.
141. Ibid.
142. Inder Malhotra, n. 1, p. 16

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10
Nights of Long Knives-I
(Pogrom, Accord, Fraudulent Commissions & State Repression)
(1984 - 1988)

The assassination of Indira Gandhi on the morning of October 31, 1984, pre-empted Indira's Operation Shanti, to commit mass scale genocide of the Sikhs all over India, by over a week.

Rajiv Gandhi, on a visit to West Bengal, heard of his mother's death over BBC by noon, and shortly left for Delhi by an air force plane. On arrival at Palam airport in Delhi at 1540 hours, he told those present to receive him, "My mother has been shot dead. What are you doing here? Go, and take revenge. No turban (distinctive Sikh headdress) should be seen."[1]

It had its twofold impact. Firstly, Arjun Das, a Congress(I) member of Metropolitan Council, in whose constituency the AIIMS (All India Institute of Medical Science) lay, shortly afterwards, brought forth a group of 30-35 Youth Congress(I) activists to the nearby INA market. They caught hold of the turban of a Sikh youth and tossed it up in the air. When it came down, it was tossed up again. The shopkeepers made the youth to disappear. A bonfire was made of the turban. More turbans were added to it, of those travelling in the buses as also vehicles of the Sikh passersby. They were now beaten up mercilessly. The Sikh shops were looted and put to fire. So was the case with the nearby Laxmi Bai Nagar and Kidwai Nagar Gurdwaras, which were gutted. Worst still, the *Adi Granth*, the holy book, was defecated upon.[2] That marked the beginning of organised violence against the Sikhs in Delhi.

Secondly, it signalled Arun Nehru, a scion of Gangu Brahmin and a minister of Indira's cabinet to take over the command.[3] Word went around to Youth Congress(I) hoodlums in Delhi, and by nightfall all over India, to put to action the Operation Shanti. In Delhi, Congress(I) Members of Parliament(MPs), Members of Metropolitan Council, Municipal Corporation and Youth Congress got the directive. So did the Delhi police to stand aside, and assist where needed.

Significantly, about 1730 hours, when Rajiv Gandhi came out of AIIMS after seeing the dead body of his mother, he was greeted with the slogan *khoon ka badla khoon se*, blood for blood. H.K.L. Bhagat, the doyen of Delhi's underworld urged the crowd, "What is the point of assembling here."[4] Their field of operations lay elsewhere.

Already the atmosphere had been vitiated by All India Radio's giving out the identity of the shooters as two Sikhs and a clean shaven Sikh! That must have been at the instance of a high official. It was violative of the norms in such a matter. In the surcharged atmosphere of hatred created by Indira over the media against the Sikhs, it was bound to have violent repercussions. And, there were incidents of sporadic violence at various places in India.

Intriguingly, how could one make out that the clean shaven man was not a Hindu? The news agencies, PTI and UNI, quoted eye-witnesses about the involvement of three persons, two of whom had been shot dead (as it came out Satwant Singh managed to survive), and the third injured. By late in the evening, the strategy to cover-up the moles in Indira set up, the real culprits behind the assassination, had been masterminded. At the instance of a top adviser, the news agencies astonishingly withdrew the story about the third man. The news about Sub-Inspector Rameshwar

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Dayal, Indira's security guard (who was trailing behind Indira Gandhi, Narayan Singh, Nathu Singh and R.K. Dhawan), receiving three bullet wounds from behind, in his thighs, was suppressed for two days. Thereafter, it was leaked in a surreptitious manner.[5] Was there another man firing from behind? The post mortem report too suggested there being another assassin.[6] Satwant Singh was not far wrong when he later said that bullets were flying all around.

Shortly afterwards followed, to the AIIMS, President, Giani Zail Singh. He came directly from the airport on his return from his special visit to North Yemen. The crowd outside the AIIMS had by now become nasty. It stoned his cavalcade as it slowed down at the gate on arrival. As one Security Officer later put it, it wanted to square up Indira's slaughter with that of President Zail Singh, a Sikh. Later, Zail Singh was permitted to escape, after tasting the stone throwing crowd's fury, only because he gave indication of his mind to straightaway induct Rajiv Gandhi as Prime Minister.

Zail Singh did so without consulting members of Indira's cabinet or senior leaders of Congress(I) Party. Subsequently, he rationalised that he did so, firstly, to save the Congress party from a certain split, and, secondly, "I wanted to repay a part of my debt to Nehru-Gandhi dynasty."[7] There was nothing surprising in that. Placing of party and family interests over that of the country was part of Congress culture. Zail Singh's action was partly voluntary, partly under duress. He had been musing over the issue during the hours of his return flight from Yemen. Rajiv attributed his coming into power, to the muscle power his partisans had shown outside the AIIMS. They could have lynched Zail Singh in case of contrary indications. Rajiv felt no sense of gratitude to Zail Singh. The perspectives being at variance right from the beginning, there was little rapport between the two. It was not long that Zail Singh came to rue his impetuous decision.

Rajiv's taking the oath of office at 1845 hours (with three members of Cabinet) gave him the wherewithal to "teach the Sikhs a lesson". Indira's funeral was fixed for November 3, afternoon, notwithstanding the fact that her bullet-riddled body needed immediate cremation. The Congress(I) set up got two full days and three nights to wreck vengeance on the Sikhs. Delhi Transport Corporation(DTC) buses were commissioned to fetch people from Haryana and rural areas throughout the night.

Situation in Delhi deteriorated fast. By late in the night, organised violence against the Sikhs had spread to all parts of the city. Marauding crowds were on the rampage. Reference was made to 119 incidents of violence, incendiarism and killing of the Sikhs, including 13 Gurdwaras, on October 31 before the Misra commission.[8]

Word went around on the night of October 31, to Congress(I) set up all over the country to start anti-Sikh pogrom from 9 a.m. the following day. It had a greater impact in Congress(I) ruled Hindi or cow belt States, with Delhi playing the leading role. In the south, situation took a different turn and fury against the Sikhs was much less except in Tamil Nadu. So was the case with non-Congress ruled West Bengal where it was promptly suppressed. The only State which remained incident free was Punjab where much malignedly-talked about backlash at slaughter of the Sikhs in other parts of India, did not take place.[9]

In Delhi, charge was immediately taken by H.K.L. Bhagat, Minister in both Indira and Rajiv Cabinets, king of the underworld, who can even now marshal 200,000 hoodlums fully armed at a couple of hours notice. He was ably assisted by Sajjan Kumar Congress(I) M.P. from outer Delhi,

Dharam Das Shastri and Jagdish Tytler, Congress(I) M.P.s, and youth Congress leaders. "Several meetings were held all over Delhi - Central, Outer, and Trans-Yamuna area - in the late hours of October 31, to give final touches, as it were, to the plan already prepared with meticulous care, with an eye on every minute detail that nothing was left out to successfully exterminate the Sikhs."[10] The worst affected parts were Bhagat's constituency across Yamuna where he and members of his family personally led violence, and the outlying colonies like Kodapur, Inderpuri, Tughlaqabad and Palam which fell to Sajjan Kumar's thugs. Among the affluent colonies, the worst affected were those bordering on villages and resettlement colonies.

The evidence led before the Misra Commission revealed that the pattern of violence throughout the Hindi belt was the same. The lumpen elements led by local Congress(I) leaders, and armed with uniform rods," crow bars, cans, kerosene, inflammable powder, fire arms, lathis and voters lists earmarking the Sikh houses played havoc with the Sikhs and their establishments. Gurdwaras were invariably the first attacked and destroyed to break the Sikhs morally. Then their houses and shops were looted and the residences put to fire. The men were beaten to death or roasted alive with the help of tyres soaked in kerosene around their necks; others were shaved off by barbers accompanying the mobs. Their educational institutions were pillaged.

It was for the first time after independence that places of religious worship of a community were sought to be destroyed wholesale. It was worse, as recorded by Misra Commission, the lumpen elements under Congress(I)'s inspiration defecated at *Adi Granth* and Sikh religious literature on a large scale. They acted the way their ancestors had done with the Buddhist holy places and holy books in the 9th century. In the present case, they did that with full state support - of the Prime Minister and his party stalwarts whose hands were soaked in Sikhs blood; of the police which either actively participated with the mobs, or where required deprived the Sikhs of their licensed weapons to the glee of the unruly hoodlums, or stood by; of the DTC which diverted its buses to Haryana and to rural areas to gather together lumpen elements at the instance of Congress(I) leaders; of the Doordarshan (Indian TV) which carried slogans of *Sardar*, *Quam ke Ghaddar* (Sikhs, traitors to the nation) and *khoon ka badla khoon se* (blood for blood) raised by lumpen elements at Indira's dead body which lay in state; of the judiciary which made no suo moto move to discipline the state after gruesome details of happenings, for instance in Block 2 of Trilokpuri, were published by the media. It was a case of silent anti-Sikh conspiracy, the upshot of months of Goebblian-type propaganda painting the Sikhs in lurid colours.

In the resettlement colonies of Jahangirpuri, Kalyanpuri, Mangolpuri, Sultanpuri and Trilokpuri where the local Hindus and Muslims joined together under the slogans *Hindu-bhai*, *Muslim-bhai - Sardaron ki karen safai*, *Sardaron ko jala do*, *loot lo*, *Sardaron ko mar do* - (Hindu-Muslim brothers annihilate the Sikhs; burn the Sikhs, loot them, kill them)[12], the destruction of the Sikh life and property was complete. The menfolk were brutally killed while their women were subjected to group rape amidst shouts by a gleeful crowd, "O Sikhs, you used to say that you saved the honour of Hindu women (from foreign marauders in the 18th century), now come and save the honour of your own women". The Hindus under Congress(I) leadership sought to regain their national honour by humiliating the Sikhs and attacking the main Sikh shrines -Gurdwaras Sis Ganj and Rakab Ganj - associated with Guru Tegh Bahadur who, to their knowledge, had laid down his life to save Hinduism from Aurangzeb's onslaught. Verily, that was the Gandhian way of repaying a national debt!

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No distinction was made between one set of the Sikhs as against the other. The Sikhs associated with Congress(I) were not spared. Charanjit Singh, Congress(I) M.P. from South Delhi had his soft drinks complex damaged. The partisans of Tejwant Singh of Skippers Group in vain pleaded with the Hindu mob to spare his Janak Cinema complex as at Indira's instance he had rebuilt Akal Takht in face of the Sikhs' of those travel ling in the bus's hostility. Hindus downrightly condemned him a mercenary and set it to fire.[13]

The middle class Hindus were not actively involved in the mayhem.[14] But "the vast majority of Hindus felt that the killer mobs Were on the right track and that the Sikhs needed to be taught a lesson." Tavleen Singh, who spoke to a cross section of them shortly afterwards, continues, that, "This was the answer I got not just from ordinary men in the street but even from those who had received elitist, westernised, liberal education. Everybody seemed to feel that the killing of innocent Sikhs was completely justified."[15]

The *Indian Express* of November 1, 1984, gave in detail the news of the emergent violence against the Sikhs. There was a clear case for calling in the army which was available in strength, but Delhi administration and the Union Home Ministry wilfully did not do so.[16] The worst violence in Delhi took place on November 1 and 2, 1984. It had to be brought to control by November 3, because of presence or foreign heads of state or government or high dignitaries at Indira's funeral slated for that day.

Home Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao went over All India Radio on November 1 to say that marauders had enough of revenge and should new restrain their hands. That was a signal that they could at the most have another day. Riotous mobs carried out their operations throughout the November 1, night into November 2, afternoon. They were incensed by false rumours, sedulously spread by the police on November 1, of the Sikhs having ganged together and attacked certain localities, the Sikhs poisoning of Chandrawal water reservoir supplying water to Delhi; and the Sikhs in Punjab cutting up Hindus travelling by Jhelum express and other trains reaching Delhi and U.P. railway stations.

The *India Today* (November 30, 1984) team of journalists reported that there were clear cases of police complicity and active participation in riots in Delhi; worst, the entire Sikh constabulary, some 20 percent of the force, was withdrawn to give full leeway to the Hindu mobs. Even the Sikh soldiers in Delhi cantonment were disarmed and confined to the barracks. The *India Today* went on: "The culpability of police was next only to that of Congress(I) politicians in Delhi. . . the local people, including Hindus, pointed the finger at the local Congress(I) leaders. Prominent names mentioned were of four Congress (I) M.P.s mentioned earlier and Brahma Yadav, Delhi Youth Congress(I) President - all of whom alongwith small time Congress(I) politicians wanted arrested hoodlums to be released." The police adopted the noval method of asking looters to leave the looted property on the roadside and at certain spots, delinking the criminal from the crime. The recovered items were misappropriated by others. "Security men pointed out that if each theatre of violence is studied carefully, it is easy to pinpoint the outlying villages or suburban colonies from where the marauding hordes came", and, that, "These are not just their vote banks, they are also their rally banks" providing "the bulk of manpower for the various Congress(I) rallies in the capital."

The trains approaching Delhi from Haryana and U.P. saw brutal attacks on the Sikh passengers including the Sikh army officers and jawans in their uniforms. The worst stations were Hailey Mandi and Palwal outside Delhi and Tughlaqabad in Delhi.

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The Peoples Union of Democratic Rights and the Peoples Union for Civil Liberties brought out their findings in November 1984 under the title "*Who are the Guilty*". They enumerated the names of politicians, members of Congress(I) including M.P.s, Members of Metropolitan Council and Municipal Corporation, policemen and others who took prominent part in organising and manning the riots. Subsequently, in January 1985 the Citizens for Democracy in *Truth About Delhi Violence: Report to the Nation* corroborated the glaring facts of Congress(I) and official participation in anti-Sikh carnage. A couple of other teams too conducted their enquiries detailing the eyewitness accounts of open police connivance and the refusal of police stations even to register cases. The government or Congress(I) did not dare to proceed against any of these outright exposures, but chose to proceed against the *Spokesman* weekly for some of its write ups.

Haryana saw widespread violence all over the state with Congress(I) under Chief Minister Bhajan Lal playing a prominent role. Twelve towns including Gurgaon, Faridabad, Rewari and Sonepat were placed under curfew. There was considerable loss of life and property which remained untabulated. So was the case with anti-Sikh pogrom in Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan.

"In terms of both enormity and brutality, violence in Bihar was next only to that in the Capital. The three day frenzy claimed no less than 200 lives" said the report in the *India Today* (November 30, 1984). Here again, the marauding mobs were led by leaders of Congress(I) and its youth wing, while the police stood by. In words of the DMK-P leader Roshan Lal Bhatia," the whole operation was led and masterminded by Congress(I) Seva Dal Volunteers, the Youth Congress(I) and the police." It was the same pattern as in Delhi. In Bokaro, "the entire locality where the Gurdwara and the houses of Sikhs were located was razed to the ground and every Sikh put to death." The Sikhs were killed in Dhanbad, Ranchi, Daltonganj, Patna, Jamshedpur, Jhumritailaiya, Hazari Bagh, Muzaffarpur and Bhagalpur. Army was called out (but not authorised to maintain law and order) in seven towns, 15 towns were placed under curfew, though it was not enforced for two crucial days. The violence was so thorough that thousands of the Sikh families saw their safety in migration to Punjab.

In U.P., the pattern of Delhi violence was repeated ad nauseum with Congress(I) activists leading mobs of lumpen elements. Worst affected were Kanpur and Lucknow. Misra Commission, as usual in under estimation, accounted for only 127 deaths in Kanpur. The Sikhs were put to death in bulk in Ghaziabad and Lucknow. False rumours of bodies of Hindus slain by the Sikhs in Punjab arriving by Punjab Mail at Lucknow led to the Sikh rail passengers being massacred at Lucknow railway station with police abetting in the crime. In Kanpur, evidence led before Justice Misra revealed that "the crimes were almost of the same pattern as the riotous mobs at Delhi committed" viz, damage, desecration and burning of the Sikh shrines, looting and then burning of residential and business premises, and killing of the Sikhs.

Madhya Pradesh widely saw the anti-Sikh carnage. Of the 45 districts, only two Panna and Dhalie were unaffected. The worst affected were Indore, Morena and Gairatganj. Trains were stopped and the Sikh passengers including a Railway ticket examiner were killed.

In Maharashtra, Kapargaon and Ahmadnagar claimed Sikh lives. The Sikhs came out of the holocaust very badly mauled. Psychologically the most terrible blow was to their self-image, of their being lions - protectors of the weak and fighters against injustice and tyranny. The Hindus got a rarest of rare opportunity to rub salt into their wounds. Averring to the atrocities perpetrated by

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them they tauntingly said, *yad karega khalsa*, Khalsa shall remember, in parody *to raj karega Khalsa*, Khalsa shall rule. And, the Hindus were not far wrong. The Sikhs cannot forget the humiliations heaped on them at first in Operations Bluestar and Woodrose, and again in the aftermath of Indira's assassination, all in 1984. That constitutes a milestone for rise of militant assertion of their national self-identity as Jallianwala massacre did in the freedom struggle.

According to intelligence sources, the total number of the Sikhs killed throughout India in the aftermath of Indira's killing could be between 12,000 to 20,000.[17]

The demand for judicial probe into anti-Sikh carnage and to punish the guilty, produced sullenness in various segments of Congress(I) leaders. The different constituents of lumpen elements openly named, or in the process of being named, by media and various investigating agencies, felt uneasy. They got their opportunity at Congress(I) rally at India Gate lawns on Indira's birthday, November 19, addressed by Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi. The mass of audience consisted of the lumpen elements and their managers. The behaviour of the crowd was quite nasty. It seemed it would lynch Mahinder Singh Sathi, the only Sikh Congress(I) leader and Mayor of Delhi[18] present on the dais, in the presence of Prime Minister. The crowd was unaware that Rajiv had a number of skeletons in his cupboard to hide. He had to prevent himself being exposed in any probe into anti-Sikh turmoil. Rajiv assured them and amidst applause exonerated them. Precisely, he said that when a big, banyan, tree falls, the earth below trembles. That set the tenor for his forthcoming election campaign for the Lok Sabha.

The Congress(I) in a vicious campaign sought to convert the anti-Sikh pogrom into votes in Lok Sabha elections in end-December. One of the main theme of the campaign was the threat posed to the Indian unity by the Sikhs.

Rajiv wilfully misconstrued and twisted the Anandpur Sahib Resolution in search for political gains. Full page advertisements were inserted in various newspapers highlighting such a threat to national integrity in a subtle and not so subtle a manner.

Indira was depicted as a martyr in the cause of Indian unity. Huge posters showed the Sikhs in uniform shooting at her. Others showed rolls of barbed wire alongside the slogan, "Will the country's border finally be moved to your doorsteps?" Beneath was another slogan in bold relief, "India could be your vote away from unity or separation." Then there was the question put in a less subtle manner, "Why should you feel uncomfortable riding in a taxi driven by a taxi driver who belongs to another state?" Rajiv in a nasty campaign accused the opposition of backing the "secessionists and anti-nationals". Finally, his supporters broke all barriers when they raised outrageous slogans against his Sikh sister-in-law (the widow of his younger brother Sanjay Gandhi) Maneka who was opposing him in Amethi constituency. One of their precise slogan was *beti hai Sardar ki*, *quam hoi ghaddar ki* (she is daughter of a Sikh, she belongs to a race of traitors).[19]

The campaign had its greatest impact in Hindi states or cow belt. The Hindus' attitude towards the Sikhs was most intimidating. One of the slogans shouted by them was *jeeten gay to looten gay*, *haaren gay to maaren gay* - If we win will loot you, if we lose we will beat you up.[20] Such slogans signifying the Hindu chauvinism or Hindu backlash, apart from modern techniques of election management, yielded Congress(I) rich dividends.

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For the first time in independent India, it secured just under 50 per cent votes. Because of electoral multiplication in its favour, that yielded Rajiv over 75 per cent seats in Lok Sabha. Significantly, H.K.L. Bhagat, whose constituency in East Delhi had seen more thorough destruction of the Sikh life and property following Indira's assassination, won the seat with greatest margin of victory - of over 500,000 votes. Verily, the Sikhs felt that "the majority community had given its verdict in support of brutal genocide of innocent Sikhs."[21] The situation seemed tailor-made in the context of "Harvard Sociologist Kar Deusch's warning - however grim - that the last resort of the frustrated is terrorism."[22]

Rajiv was not unaware that he had overplayed the anti-Sikh card. There were warnings to him to climb down in case the government wanted to keep the Sikhs within the Union. There were forebodings of hard core elements assuming pre-eminence in the voice of the community. Rajiv tried his hands at conflict management in his nationwide broadcast on January 5, 1985. Precisely, he said that he gave settlement of the Punjab problem 'top priority'. His setting up a 3 member Cabinet sub-committee comprising S.B. Chavan, P.V. Narasimha Rao and K.C. Pant, a day earlier, pointed to that. But again the considerations of electroral gains in elections to the ten state assemblies fixed for the first week of March held the upper hand and prevented any positive move.

The government by the time had made false move to cover up the lead it got as to the international conspiracy to kill Indira. The investigations into Indira's assassination were complete by November 19, 1984. Only Beant Singh and Satwant Singh were involved; Balbir Singh and Kehar Singh were romped in. The Special Investigation Team (SIT) headed by Anantram drew a blank even after the arrest of Simranjit Singh Mann in November, 1984, as it found no linkage between him and the Delhi group. Then, it started looking into international dimensions. In January 1985 it unravelled the network of spies, none of them a Sikh, operating right in Prime Minister's Secretariat, and under the very nose of her Principal Secretary, P.C. Alexander, right from Indira's second term in power. The secrets were being sold for a song. Hesitatingly, the government disclosed the names of East European diplomats besides those of France involved in, what it called, industrial and defence secrets! One has yet to come across a photocopying machine that would not Xerox political secrets! The agencies like KGB, CIA, Mossad, SDECE and others had their fingers in the pie. The government chose not to pursue the lead as to the real motives behind Indira's killing, or the mastermind behind the murder and leaking of classified information; that would have shown that Rajiv, since his taking over as Prime Minister, had been talking through his hat! What was involved was not only his credibility, but also of December 1984 elections, fought on a false premise. The government did not like to get at the truth as that was unpalatable.[23]

By *Basant Panchmi* in early February 1985 heralding change in season, the mounting Sikh anger was reflected in the spread of *kesari* coloured turbans signifying the spirit of sacrifice, and in this case defiance of the central government, at public meetings and functions all over Punjab. This was more glaring at *Hola Mohalla* celebrations, March 6-8, at Anandpur Sahib. The *ektara* provided the music to songs eulogising Bhindrawale, Beant Singh and Satwant Singh for their sacrifices. The audio-cassettes had the power of scream and strength of a war cry by a committed few.[24] The tradition of martyrdom and self-sacrifice made the militant ideology attractive to the Sikh youth. The dividing line between the extremists and non-extremists got thinner.

The Babbar Khalsa issued warning against any one showing weakness. Akali Dal and the SGPC on March 7, coinciding with Congress(I)s repeating its electoral performance in-the Assembly elections, issued an ultimatum to the government to institute a judicial enquiry into the anti-Sikh

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carnage in November 1984 and release their leaders by Baisakhi day, i.e. April 13, or face an agitation named "genocide week."

That somewhat provided a corrective to Rajiv, aptly termed, "Mr. Confused" by Khushwant Singh. The government resorted to selective release of the Sikh leaders, to drive a wedge between them. Seven Akali leaders, inter alia, Sant Harchand Singh Longowal, Surjit Singh Barnala (both moderates) and Jagdev Singh Talwandi (who of late had played a dubious role in Sikh polity) were released on March 12, while Parkash Singh Badal and Gurcharan Singh Tohra were not. Two days later, Arjun Singh, who a day earlier had been inducted as Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh, was named new Governor of Punjab. He now emerged PM's main advisor on Punjab. The Cabinet sub-committee found time to visit the state on week-ends.

Censorship on the press was relaxed and army control in certain districts was withdrawn. During his first visit to Punjab on March 23, at Hussainiwala borders, where Pakistanis were celebrating their national day, Rajiv gave the Punjabis a sop in announcing his decision to set up a Railway coach factory at Kapurthala to create employment avenues for Punjabis. There were reports of Raghunandan Lal Bhatia and Swaran Singh playing a conciliatory role with the Akalis.

Meanwhile *ragis* (minstrels) going around the villages praising Bhindranwale, Beant Singh and Satwant Singh drew evocative response. Even at the *Kirtan Darbar* telecast from Jalandhar Radio Station on March 22-23, the slogans *Bhindranwale amar rahe* and *Khalistan Zindabad* came through clearly. The government's honouring the army men for their role in Operation Bluestar added salt to the wounds and made the Sikhs to honour family members of Beant Singh and Satwant Singh.

The cult of bomb was not far away. A hand grenade was thrown on Ram Naumi procession at Amritsar on March 30. Shortly afterwards came a series of acts of terrorism. A police sub-inspector was shot at in Jalandhar, militants tried to enter a Judge's house in Chandigarh, and beat up security men of some Congress(I) M.P.s on mass contact in Ferozepur. A bomb was spotted at Chandigarh on the route President Zail Singh was to take; the car of Giani Kirpal Singh (who had given the controversial statement under army bayonets about *Kotha Sahib* in Akal Takht being intact) was shot at.[25] Obviously, there was escalation in violence. Incidents started occurring with somewhat regularity.

Who were the organisers behind these incidents? Which hands pulled the triggers from behind? Who were the masterminds? What sort of organisation they set up? Did they follow the example of Anusilan Samiti set up by Bengal revolutionaries following 1905 partition of Bengal? And, what pattern they followed? For once, no one knew either about the organisers, or the centre(s) of operations. One thing, however, was clear. There were multiple centres, operating independently of each other. The Government of India, as usual, blamed Pakistan for providing training and wherewithals to perpetrators of these incidents. That was part of the story. So was the case with direct involvement of elements from within Congress(I) and Indian intelligence agencies, to which we shall revert shortly.

The union government acted rather belatedly. On April 11,1985, it announced its willingness to institute a judicial enquiry into November 1984 killings in Delhi, (Justice Ranganath Misra a sitting judged of Supreme Court was named to head the enquiry), lifted the ban on A.I.S.S.F. and agreed to review the cases of detainees. On Baisakhi, April 13, another batch of 53 was released and Rajiv reiterated his resolve to settle the Punjab problem.

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Some elements within Congress(I) were quite upset at the change of tenor. On the eve of Baisakhi, passport size photographs of Guru Gobind Singh seated on his royal throne with hawk perched on his right hand, signifying Khalsa's resolve to resort to arms, as all peaceful avenues had failed, were widely distributed by elements closer to Congress(I). Tohra on arrival at the Golden Temple stated on April 20, that the government-built Akal Takht was not acceptable, it would be demolished and rebuilt. A fortnight later, on May 6, the divine sanction came in the form of collapse of three metre by one metre projection of rebuilt Akal Takht.[26] According to some, the Skippers' Group had cheated both the government and the Guru.

By the end of April, Longowal seemed to represent the voice of Sikh anger. Quiet consultations and involvement of men like Khushwant Singh seemed to have set the stage for a settlement.[27] The hard core within Congress(I), shocked at the apparent change in the government policy, was dead set to, firstly, sabotage Longowal' s pre-eminence to enter into an agreement, and, secondly, to "resurrect fear and hate in Hindu-Sikh relations."

The first objective was sought to be achieved by making use of Baba Joginder Singh, octogenarian father of Sant Bhindranwale. Talwandi was the obvious instrument. Baba Joginder Singh' s sudden dissolution of three Akali Dais on May 1, 1985, and formation of an *ad hoc* committee with Simranjit Singh Mann, then in Bhagalpur Jail, as convener (till his release Baba himself looking after the job), achieved the objective of cutting Longowal to size. Though Longowal was able to reassert his position in another four weeks, it was not the same again. The united Akali Dal led by Baba Joginder Singh came into being.

The second objective saw a bizarre playing up of the terrorist card by Congress(I) leaders in petty politicking. To begin with, came an attack on R.L. Bhatia who escaped. The objective, in the words of Harkishan Singh Surjeet, was to see that negotiations do not start.[28] Bhatia told Raj iv of involvement of a Senior Congress(I) leader in the attack on him.[29] This was substantiated with the arrest of Gurinder Singh shortly afterwards, and his spilling the beans about his links with Santokh Singh Randhawa, then President of , Punjab Congress(I). There were demands for arrest of Darbara Singh and Randhawa for their fathering the terrorists. To prevent further damage, Gurinder Singh was conveniently put to death while in police custody on May 10, 1985.[30]

The same day, Chaudhary Balbir Singh, a former M.P. from Hoshiarpur was put to death in an attack similar to the one on Bhatia. It generated a Hindu backlash in Hoshiarpur, and mob frenzy leading to communal clashes.[31]

From the evening of May 10, to the morning of May 11, 1985, was enacted another gruesome drama of transister bomb explosions claiming 43 lives at a score of places widely spread over all parts of Delhi; at Sirsa, Hissar and Ambala in Haryana; Alwar in Rajasthan; and Meerut and Kanpur in U.P. That showed a widespread organisation and a higher degree of coordination. That was beyond the capacity of Kartar Singh Narang an Income-Tax lawyer, Mohinder Singh Oberoi or their cohorts who were arrested within hours.

Information going around the circles pointed to H.K.L. Bhagat, who was sore at Rajiv's agreeing to a judicial probe into November 1984 killings, to be the mastermind. His short term objective was to re-enact anti-Sikh pogrom at a minor level. He was assisted by other Congress(I) malcontents and intelligence agents who had infiltrated as *sevadars* at *joraghar* - place where shoes are

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kept in Gurdwara Bangla Sahib, New Delhi - the group of noveau militants with Kartar Singh Narang's younger son as the ring leader. The intelligence agents supervised the assembling of crude devices in their sophisticated covers. Two of the four militants released from Tihar Jail and entrusted to partially distribute these transister-bombs were arrested from Lajpat Nagar in South Delhi.[32] Rajiv himself went to the police control room in Delhi, asked army to hold flag marches in the affected areas and prevented a communal backlash.[33]

Petty politicking by Congress(I) leaders was not unsuccessful. The Hindu-Sikh clashes did take place in May in Dhariwal, Gurdaspur, Ludhiana, apart from Hoshiarpur following inspired incidents of terrorism. Curfew had to be imposed in all the four cities.[34] The transistor bomb blasts gave adverse publicity to the Sikh militants or Bhindrenwale's followers who unnecessarily get the blame or credit.

Another step in the same direction was the blowing up on June 23, 1985, of Air India's Jumbo, AI-182, Emperor Kanishka, on its flight from Toronto, off Irish coast with 329 passengers on board. Another Air India plane the same day at Tokyo had a narrow escape. Zuhair Kashmeri and Brian McAndrew who made a detailed study by sifting and analysing the available evidence, were convinced that these were the handiwork of Indian intelligence agents who had penetrated Canada in a very big way.[35] Their main objective was to draw upon the reserve of American, Canadian and British repugnance to terrorism to smash in these countries the centres of Sikh militancy. These were already being subverted through Maj Gen (Retired) Jaswant Singh Bhullar. His greatest disservice to the Sikh cause was that he prevented the repression in Punjab from being projected as violation of human rights - the language which the Americans understood. Instead, he unnecessarily channelised it in sectarian, unproductive, terms. Bhullar needed such a big act to blunt the edges of the sharp swing, the Sikh militancy was getting in Northern America in the first half of 1985. The adoption of the plank of sovereign Sikh state, Khalistan, by the World Sikh Organisation headed by Bhullar at its convention at Merriot Inn, Berkley the same day (was it a coincidence?) was significant.[35a] The Government of India, on getting the signal, instantly laid the blame at the Sikh militants.

By May end, it was obvious that state terrorism was growing side by side with the growth of Sikh militancy. Rather, some members of the ruling party at the Centre and police/intelligence set ups had developed a vested interest in proliferation of acts of terrorism, conveniently attributed to the Sikh militants. The police in Punjab by now was perfecting its method of killing the Sikh youth in "police encounters or during interrogation." There was sharp rise in cases of mysterious death of Sikh youth in police custody. Punjab had become "a virtual police state", and in the words of Sanjeev Gaur "the army, the para military forces and the Punjab Police have converted an otherwise curable disease into a cancer."[36] They certainly abetted in creating an impossible imbroglio.

The celebration of *ghallughara* (holocaust) week, June 1-7, marking the first anniversary of the Operation Bluestar brought to the fore *Bibian Nabhawalian*, sisters Surjit Kaur and Jaspal Kaur of Nabha who added their melody to that of innumerable *dhadis* and *ragis* - minstrels. Their now-folksy song recalled the valiant fight put up by Bhindranwale and others, and roused the Khalsa martial spirit to 'unite' and 'defend' the faith which was under attack.[37]

These - the growth of State terrorism and Sikh militancy -alongwith alienation of the Sikhs provided the background to the secret parleys carried on by Arjun Singh with Longowal which led to Rajiv-Longowal accord in another six weeks.

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Arjun Singh had a series of 14 meetings with Akali leaders. He and Rajiv Gandhi were personally involved on Congress(I) or government side; Longowal, Barnala and Balwant Singh on Akali side. It was wily Balwant Singh who monoeuvred *vak*, a hymn read ad hoc and taken as an order, from *Adi Granth*, on July 22, telling a tense Longowal to "act courageously and stop being in two minds on vital questions". As a key Longowal aide said at the time, "For Santji it was a question of *takht* (throne) or *takhta* (chopping block)".[38] Badal wanted the release of detenues and rehabilitation of the Sikh soldiers castigated in the Operation Bluestar as pre-conditions for any accord. President Zail Singh, Buta Singh and Darbara Singh whose leadership had thrived on continuous conflict between Congress and Akalis were kept in the dark.

It were under these circumstances that Longowal and Rajiv met on July 23-24, when the two signed the Memorandum of Settlement, also known as Rajiv-Longowal Accord. It, interalia, provided for rehabilitation of the army deserters, enactment of All India Gurdwara Act, withdrawal of Armed Forces Special Powers Act, transfer of Chandigarh to Punjab by January 26, 1986, and time bound adjudication of territorial and river water claims. For the first time, contiguity and linguistic affinity, with a village as a unit was recognised. The wording in some respects, especially providing for two commissions under para 7 to adjudicate on territorial claims, was unhappy. On river waters, it sanctified usage as on July 1, 1985.

Besides, there was unwritten understanding between the two sides on many points.[39]

It would be of interest to go through the text.

1. Compensation to innocent persons killed.

1.1 Along with exgratia payment to those innocent killed in agitation or any action after August 1982, compensation for property damaged will also be paid.

2. Army recruitment.

2.1 All citizens of the country have the right to enrol in the army and merit will remain the criterion for selection.

3. Enquiry into November incidents.

3.1 The jurisdisction of Mr. Justice Ranganath Misra Commission enquiring into the November riots of Delhi would be extended to cover the disturbances at Bokaro and Kanpur also.

4. Rehabilitation of those discharged from the army.

4.1 For all those discharged, efforts will be made to rehabilitate and provide gainful employment.

5. All India Gurdwara Act.

5.1 The Government of India agrees to consider the formulation of an All India Gurdwara bill. Legislation will be brought forward for this purpose in consultation with Shiromani Akali Dal, others concerned and after fulfilling all relevant constitutional requirement.

6. Disposal of pending cases.

6.1 The notifications applying the Armed Forces Special Powers Act to Punjab will be withdrawn.
Existing special courts will try only cases relating to the following types of offences: (a) Waging War (b) Hijacking.

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6.2 All other cases will be transferred to ordinary courts and enabling legislation if needed will be brought forward in this session of Parliament.

7. Territorial claims.

7.1 The capital projects area of Chandigarh will goto Punjab. Some adjoining areas which were previously part of Hindi or the Punjabi regions were included in the Union territory. With the Capital region going to Punjab, the areas which were added to the Union Territory from the Punjab region of the erstwhile state of Punjab will be transferred to Punjab and those from Hindi region to Haryana. The entire Sukhna lake will be kept as part of the Chandigarh and will thus go to Punjab.

7.2 It had always been maintained by Mrs. Indira Gandhi that when Chandigarh is to go to Punjab some Hindi-speaking territories in Punjab will go to Haryana. A Commission will be constituted to determine the specific Hindi-speaking areas of Punjab which should go to Haryana, in lieu of Chandigarh.

The principle of contiguity and linguistic affinity with a village as a unit will be the basis of such determination. The Commission will be required to give its findings by December 31, 1985, and these will be binding on both sides. The work of the Commission will be limited to this aspect and will be distinct from the general boundary claims which the other commission referred to in para 7.4 will handle.

7.3 The actual transfer of Chandigarh to Punjab and areas in lieu thereof to Haryana will take place simultaneously on January 26, 1986.

7.4 There are other claims and counter-claims for readjustment of the existing Punjab-Haryana boundaries. The government will appoint another Commission to consider these matters and give findings. Such findings will be based on a village as a unit, linguistic affinity and contiguity.

8. Centre-State relations.

8.1 Shiromani Akali Dal states that the Anandpur Sahib resolution is entirely within the framework of the Indian Constitution, that it attempts to define the concept of Centre-State relations in a manner which may bring out the true federal characteristics of our unitary Constitution, and that the purpose of the resolution is to provide greater autonomy to the State with a view to strengthening the unity and integrity of the country, since unity in diversity forms the corner-stone of our national entity.

9. Sharing of river waters.

9.1 The farmers of Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan will continue to get water not less than what they are using from the Ravi-Beas system as on July 1, 1985. Waters used for consumptive purposes will also remain unaffected. Quantum of usage claimed shall be verified by the tribunal referred to in para 9.2 below.

9.2 The claims of Punjab and Haryana regarding their (*the* in the original draft) remaining waters will be referred for adjudication to a tribunal to be presided over by a Supreme Court judge. The decision of this tribunal will be rendered within six months and would be binding on both parties. All legal and constitutional steps required in this respect be taken expeditiously.

9.3 The construction of the SYL canal shall continue. The canal shall be completed by August 15, 1986.

10. Representation of minorities.

10.1 Existing instructions regarding protection of interests of minorities will be recirculated to the state Chief Ministers. (PM will write to all Chief Ministers).

11. Promotion of Punjabi Language.

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11.1 The Central Government may take some steps for the promotion of the Punjabi language.

This settlement brings to an end a period of confrontation and ushers in an era of amity, goodwill and co-operation, which will promote and strengthen the unity and integrity of India.

Rajiv really believed that the era of confrontation was over. He rhetorically said, especially to no one at the time of signing, to the surprise of Akali leaders present, "Should we recall Bhullar from America"? If, as Arjun Singh said, "Secrecy was the key to success" in arriving at the accord, it also led to its being stillborn. The Accord came as douche of cold ice to the inflamed Sikh- baiting nerves of the top Congress(I) leadership and their close ups. They were enraged; even the people whom one could regard as reason-able were mad with fury. They had nothing but abuse for Rajiv. If Accord had to be signed on these terms, couldn't his mother have done so in November 1982 or February 1984? What was the need for her to enact the Operation Bluestar? And, push the Sikhs out of the national mainstream, when substantially same type of Accord had to be agreed to? To them, Rajiv by entering into the Accord had become antihero; he had shown a critical lack of appreciation of fundamentals of Indian (read Hindu) polity.

The public-opinion polls conducted by certain newspapers showing overwhelming popular response to the Accord were meaningless as politics in India has never been conducted on such considerations; rather public opinion has been moulded by instilling false antibodies in the body politic. The point that Longowal had agreed to submit Anandpur Sahib Resolution to the Sarkaria Commission, and otherwise affirmed Akali Dal's commitment to the Indian unity as against the demand for secession or separatism, was off the mark. Shiv Shankar, in the words Prem Bhatia, "the shoe-shine boy," took the responsibility to play havoc with the Commissions envisaged in the Accord, while Arun Nehru and Buta Singh waited in the wings to turn things upside down.

If the Congress diehards were furious, no less were the Sikh militants. The leaders of United Akali Dal berated Longowal for betraying the *morcha*. Even Badal termed it as a "total sell out" for he was in favour of firm decisions and not Commissions headed, as earlier proved, by Commission-agents in the garb of sitting or retired judges of the highest courts. Tohra too spoke in the same vein. Both regarded the promised peace ephemeral.

At a small conclave of district jathedars, attended by Badal and Tohra too, at Gurdwara Kesgarh Sahib, Anandpur, on July 26, 1985, Longowal put the Accord for approval. He termed it "a victory for Panth", and affirmed, "This is an agreement signed not once but on each page. *This is as good as a treaty between two countries. Not since the era of Maharaja Ranjit Singh has such an agreement taken place between Punjab and Hinduastan.*"[40] He threatened to quit if the agreement was not accepted unanimously. Badal and Tohra beat a tactical retreat. The accord was approved.

Some of the steps taken, e.g. suspension of court martial trials and recruitment of some Sikh army deserters into para military forces tended to take the wind out of the criticism. The decision of the Prime Minister to go in for elections in Punjab for September 22, (put off after Longowal's assassination by three days) to restore the democratic process seemed in order, notwithstanding criticism by BJP and the left.

Badal and Tohra felt the pulse of the time and fell in line with Longowal on the fateful morning of August 20, at Chandigarh.

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The same day, the union Home Ministry struck its first nail in the coffin of Raj iv-Longowal Accord. It, in a notification appointing the former Supreme Court Judge, K.K. Mathew, to head the Commission under article 7.2, provided for "other factors" besides those provided in the Accord, viz. principles of contiguity and linguistic affinity and a village as a unit, as the basis for determining the transfer of areas in the terms of reference. Mathew's only qualification to head this Commission to separate Hindi and Punjabi speaking villages (he knew neither of the languages) was that he had earlier messed up L.N. Mishra death enquiry committee.

To top it all, the same evening, Longowal fell to the bullet of assassin at Sherpur village in Sangrur District. The militants' motivation was not incongruent to that of the top Congress(I) leaders in or out of government, who were sore at the Accord. The failure of a dozen commandos and 200 security men within the compound of the Gurdwara to provide protective security between first and second shot, with a considerable interval, was sinister.[41] The security set up had its quota of shocks shortly afterwards when Lalit Maken and his wife, and later Arjun Das were gunned down in broad day light in the Capital. Senior officials only then began to see a distinct pattern in the militant's killings.

After an unseemly controversy, Barnala emerged as Longowal's successor as Acting President of Akali Dal. The group leaders sank their difference, and put a joint list for Assembly and Lok Sabha elections. For the first time since independence, Akali Dal gained an absolute majority on its own in the Assembly elections on September 25, 1985. It won 73 out of 100 of the total of 117 seats contested. Shiromani Akali Dal surprisingly polled only 38.40 percent votes. Its major rival, Congress(I), polled 37.31 percent votes and won barely 32 seats.[42] The turn out of voters (66.54 percent) was higher than that in the tumultuous elections of 1977 (64.51%) and 1980 (64.33%). Congress(I) was not less happy to project it as a verdict against the militants.

Apart from Longowal providing the martyrdom scenario and sympathy, Akali victory was attributed to "the complete polarisation amongst non-scheduled caste votes" that "reached its apex."[43] That was part of the story. Akalis secured more Hindu votes in this election than in the past, and were successful to project themselves as a regional than a religious party. It sponsored half a dozen Hindus, a Muslim and a Christian as candidates. The militants' move to boycott the elections met halfhearted response even from elements like Bimal Khalsa, wife of Indira assassin Beant Singh, who fought the elections.

Barnala's unanimous election as leader of Akali legislature party with Badal, to the surprise of many, proposing his name should have induced in him a sense of realism. Badal's aspiration to be inducted as Deputy Chief Minister or atleast as number two in the cabinet was not misplaced. But Barnala fell to the wiles of Balwant Singh and opportunism of Amarinder Singh. The importance of Badal lay in the fact that he was the only leader available as a conduit to the militants.[44] By excluding Badal from his cabinet, Barnala showed his inherent insecurity, if not isolation from the Sikh youth. That gave a false start to Barnala's term as Chief Minister with Balwant Singh in Number 2 position. They were sworn in on September 27, alongwith four others.

The main issues that confronted Barnala immediately were, one, release of Sikh army personnel and their rehabilitation; two, the release of the youth, and the innocent persons including women and children held in Jodhpur following the Operation Bluestar; three, stoppage of false encounters and killing of the Sikh youth by the police and security forces; and, finally, the settlement

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of the Punjab problem, or implementation of Rajiv-Longowal Accord in its true spirit, to the satisfaction of the people. For that, Barnala needed a lot of goodwill of the central government which was a party to the Accord.

He began on the right note affirming his faith in the Accord. What was more germane was the fact that Rajiv's euphoria had worn thin; the elements opposed to the Accord, and fully entrenched in the union government were in full operation. The different languages the centre spoke were all orchestrated. Barnala showed a lamentable lack of awareness of the nature of forces arraigned against him.

Barnala's 21 months tenure as Chief Minister falls into three unequal parts - till January 26, 1986, when the Centre played a cat and mouse game with him and calculatedly failed to carry through the transfer of Chandigarh to Punjab in terms of the Accord; through end April 1986, the proclamation of Khalistan by militants, with the connivance if not the blessings, of the central government for narrow ends, and the police entry into the Golden Temple complex which caused a spilt in Akali party; and the residue period when Barnala had become irrelevant. He was a mere puppet in the hands of the central government or Delhi Durbar which ruled supreme.

From whatever angle one views Barnala during any of the three phases, one finds him wanting.

Barnala's only laudable action during the first phase was setting up on October 1, 1985, of a four member committee headed by Justice Ajit Singh Bains, a retired Judge of Punjab and Haryana High Court to go into the arrests in the state during the last four years. Bains did a thorough job. "The citizens' fundamental right to liberty", he opined, "is basic to any democracy; so 1 was keen to see as many people out of the Jails as fast as I could make it."[45] The Committee adopted a simple procedure. It asked the prosecution to prepare the list of cases district wise, take the help of district attorneys and the police, and present evidence they had in each case. The evidence in majority of cases was flimsy. The police reportedly admitted, it had implicated innocent people to escape pressure from higher ups. False murder and conspiracy cases, and of the people taken into custody after false encounters, came to light.

In a fortnight, the Committee recommended release of over 2,000 detainees as also of over 150 Hindu Suraksha Samiti volunteers, including its President Pawan Kumar Sharma. Its most significant recommendation was to ask Punjab government to approach the central government for release of most of 450 people arrested by army during the Operation Bluestar from the Golden Temple complex and two other Gurdwaras. Only 25 of them were hardcore supporters of Bhindranwale. Others had died or had fled. Of the 379 detenues held in Jodhpur, most of them were innocent pilgrims including women and children, or the SGPC employees.

The Committee, thereafter, started screening the cases of those already convicted. Despite police obstruction, it was able to look into 80 percent of the cases. It found 99 percent of the police encounter cases to be 'bogus'.[46]

Barnala, instead of releasing those recommended, fell under the evil spell of Rajiv Gandhi who charged the Punjab government of indiscriminate release. This was despite the fact that, of the 2,000 persons released, none had joined the rank of the militants. Barnala's timidity put a heart to the police to oppose releases. His setting up a 'police committee' to screen the recommendations of

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Bains Committee was unkindest of all. This led to a slanging match between Bains and the state police which was accused by him of indulging in state terrorism. It, all the more, hurt Barnala's image. Of the over 2,000 persons who had been actually released, 833 were already on bail. Barnala government's pusillanimity "in not accepting the recommendations of its own committee" further alienated the Sikh youth.[47]

What for was Barnala turning his back on the most solemn commitments made by Longowal and the Akali Dal plank? The central government had already shown its perfidy while issuing notification specifying the terms of reference of Mathew Commission under article 7.2 (to determine Hindi speaking area on the principles of contiguity and linguistic affinity with a village as a unit). When Barnala government objected to "other factors at the discretion of the Commission", the Centre expressed its inability to modify its notification. That was quite an unmaintainable position.

Rajiv's declaration on October 11, that no Congress(I) government (meaning Haryana) would take advantage of the 'objectionable clause' in terms of reference, only showed the imbecility of union government's position. Haryana Chief Minister Bhajan Lal, in another 10 days, based his entire case for Fazilka and Abohar on the 'objectionable clause'. And, Mathew, whose strings were being pulled from behind, refused to go by the 1971 or 1981 census which showed 85 percent of the people of the area were Punjabi speaking. The affirmation by Census Commissioner of the 1971 and 1981 figures meant nothing to Mathew. He did not want to go by 1961 census either, as over 500 villages in Haryana according to that census were Punjabi speaking.

Mathew was aware of Punjabi speaking village of Kandu Khera which broke Haryana's link with Fazilka or Abohar but still mischievously suggested fresh enumeration in Fazilka and Abohar as if in the form of a referendum. Only enumeration in Kandu Khera village would have been enough. He was not bothered if that worked up communal passions. Verily, in the words of Balwant Singh, "there are some elements in Congress(I) and the bureaucracy at the Centre who want to keep Punjab in turmoil."

Mathew's tenure was extended from end-October to end-November to end-December, then January 15, and eventually to January 25, 1986. He suggested enumeration in Fazilka and Abohar in November and left for Kerala to wine away his time.

Bhajan Lal was unleashed by Rajiv in November. He went wild at the Congress centenary celebrations the following month. He played up the communal (read Hindu-chauvinstic) feelings and asserted "We shall not let Punjab have Chandigarh till Abohar and Fazilka are transferred to us and till the water of the canal flows into Haryana."[48] Here, Bhajan Lal was modifying even the Rajiv-Longowal Accord, for flow of water was scheduled only from August 15, 1986. Barnala rightly observed, "Bhajan Lal has no courage to speak a word unless his bosses in Delhi tell him to do so. I fear mischief at the Central hand and that is very sad".[49] As if by design, there was increase in number of killings in Punjab in November-December. S. Vishwam observed that "extremism was again sought to be used as an instrument of political blackmail."[49a]

Barnala correctly saw linkage in Congress(I)'s volte face and revival of terroristic acts in Punjab. The involvement of Nihangs of Baba Santa Singh in indiscriminate shooting of pilgrims at Fatehgarh Sahib on younger *Sahibzada's* martyrdom day was a pointer. As Barnala saw it, if there were two incidents by militants, there were ten by others, complicating the situation.

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Barnala crushed with a heavy hand the AISSF sponsored '*rasta roko*', stop the traffic on roads, stir on January 10, 1986. He should have been accommodative to the AISSF in view of the earlier Haryana Government's full cooperation with the opposition, Devi Lal-led, march to Parliament House in Delhi in December. In view of the developing situation. Barnala should have kept his options open. if not his lines of communications with the Sikh youth intact.

Eventually, when Mathew's pre-orchestrated non-award came on January 25, 1986. he averred that because of Punjabi speaking Kandu Khera village, he was not able to recommend any area in Abohar and Fazilka to Haryana (which was hot willing to accept 13 or so villages offered by Punjab in Patiala district). The whole process of Rajiv-Longowal Accord stood subverted. Mathew's job was not to arbitrate but give an award, and his lack of application to Punjab's offer of 13 villages in Patiala district was result of behind the scene manoeuvering. He was not worth his salt, and slur on judiciary. The Centre's insistence that Barnala should offer 90 villages to Haryana in lieu of Chandigarh spoke of malefic configuration.[50] That was also obvious in Centre's not constituting second linguistic tribunal under article 9.4. The other commission on river waters was constituted only on January 24, 1986.

On January 26, 1986, the much awaited transfer of Chandigarh to Punjab stood aborted. The same day, the cadres of Damdami Taksal and AISSF, in terms of a face saving compromise SGPC had entered with them that talked of joint *kar seva*,[51] took over Akal Takht and hoisted saffron Khalistan flag (with words Khalistan superscribed on it). Reprehensibly, Mohkam Singh, a Taksal spokesman, who, in the words of Wassan Singh Zafarwal, did much to disrupt Taksal as a movement, announced to the large gathering the disbandment of the SGPC, dismissal of the Akal Takht and the Golden Temple head priests and a host of other steps[52] to the glee of the central government. Mohkam Singh was only serving as New Delhi's cat's paw. The dissolution of the SGPC and the DSGMC (Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee) had been on the top of Indira's agenda.

Some speak of adoption of a *gurmatta*, a resolution, calling for a sovereign Sikh state, Khalistan. But no such resolution was formally put forth to the vast congregation. As a matter of fact, a basic document was drawn up by Dalbir Singh, Correspondent of the daily *Tribune* (Chandigarh), "to form a political network to achieve the reorganisation of society in the light of Sikh principles."[52a] But in the wee hours of January 26, 1986, Dr. Sohan Singh, retired Director Health Services Punjab, brought forth the issue of Khalistan and wanted a *gurmatta* to be adopted. Dalbir Singh avers that he walked out.[52b] According to informed circles, slips were drawn after a formal *ardas*, prayer, and the verdict was not to go ahead with such a resolution. The matter rested at that. Joyce Pettigrew quates Dr. Sohan Singh to say that no such resolution was adopted.

Barnala's woes knew no bounds. His position was more of a leper, or of the washerman's dog. He could not take the forthright stand and resign at subversion of the Rajiv-Longowal Accord on non-transfer of Chandigarh to Punjab on January 26. He, for his own reasons, chose to stick to his office, to the dismay of New Delhi. Even President, Giani Zail Singh, informally tendered him advice to quit: he did so to further New Delhi's wider objectives to plunge Punjab into turmoil.

The AISSF recognised the gravity of the situation, dissociated itself from the move, and asked Mohkam Singh to confine himself only to the *Kar seva* and not indulge in other adventurous moves. Tohra too expected Thakar Singh to contain his Taksal enthusiasts.

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To complete the story about the two other commissions that followed on Chandigarh's transfer to Punjab:

The first to follow was headed by Justice E.S. Venkataramiah. Set up on April 2, 1986 (to complete its work by the end of May), its terms of reference were to locate contiguous Hindi-speaking villages to be awarded to Haryana in lieu of Chandigarh. Haryana under the new Chief Minister Bansi Lal chose at first not to cooperate in identifying any villages. Then on May 29, it put forth claim to 483 Hindi-speaking villages. That led to extension of the Commission's tenure to June 10.

Chandigarh, it may be mentioned, has a total area of 28,500 acres. Of this, 52, percent i.e. 15,000 acres fall to Haryana's share on the Capital's transfer to the Punjab. In lieu of the balance of 13,500 acres going to Punjab, Venkataramiah suggested that Punjab should transfer 70,000 acres of land to Haryana! On what basis he arrived at this figure, he did not spell out. He stated that article 7.4 of the Accord provided for appointment of another commission for readjustment of the existing Punjab-Haryana boundaries "based on a village as a unit, linguistic affinity and contiguity". As such, in his views, article 7.2 of the Accord providing for the same criterion for identifying areas in Punjab for transfer to Haryana in lieu of Chandigarh was perverse. He wanted the Accord to be rewritten; he sought to rectify, what he regarded as, Rajiv's mistake and give the Accord a new shape. Venkataramiah acted more of a politician, a mischievous one at that, than a judge. He pointed to Punjab's offer of 31 Hindi-speaking villages near Manimajra constituting 45,000 acres, but said another Commission should be appointed to locate 25,000 acres "without insisting upon proof regarding the question whether they are Hindi speaking or Punjabi speaking". In short, he wanted Punjab to transfer Punjabi speaking villages to Haryana. Only that could meet a perverted Brahmins sense of justice! His airing his views on Article 7.4 of the Accord was preposterous and showed malefic influence under which he was working.

The Punjab Cabinet expressed "its deep sense of anguish to find that the Commission has made recommendations unwarranted by its terms of reference as also by the letter and spirit of the accord." It "urged the Centre to review the report and strike down the portions transgressing and violating the terms of reference."[53]

This made the Un ion government to set up yet another Commission on June 20, 1986. headed by Justice D.A. Desai, Chairman Law Commission, who agreed to give an award in 18 or even 12 hours. That was something exceptional. He had never worked with that speed throughout his life; neither had any of his ilk in High or Supreme Courts, otherwise there would have been no arrears! Following Venkataramiah's recommendations, his terms of reference did not specify that he was to locate only Hindi speaking areas, or go by the specifics provided in article 7.2 of the Accord, namely contiguity, linguistic affinity and village as a unit. In short Desai agreed to give an award on the basis of thuggery!

Though the Union Government sought to amend Desai's terms of reference and extend his tenure to July 15, Barnala government finding the general tenor of the central government inimical, chose to ignore the Desai Commission. Thereby this part of the Accord was a total flop.

In the words of Nikhil Chakravarty, a leading journalist, the three judges had devalued their standing in the eyes of the public.

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Barnala's experience with the other Commission, under Article 9, on river waters was not much different. To begin with, the Commission was required to give its decision within six months. But the Union government took exactly six months to constitute the Commission, headed by Justice V. Balakrishna Eradi, a sitting judge of the Supreme Court, on January 24, 1986.

Under the Accord, Akal is had already compromised their position that under the riparian or river valley law, as applied earlier in the cases of Narbada and Kaveri river waters disputes, Haryana had no locus standi in Ravi-Beas river systems. Haryana had got Punjab's full share of Yamuna waters of 5.58 maf: it was drawing 3.29 maf through Western Yamuna Canal, and could get another 2.29 maf when a new canal is completed. The Accord assured Haryana as also Punjab and Rajasthan water not less than what they were getting on July 1, 1985, from Ravi-Beas system: exact quantum was to be verified by the Tribunal.

Eradi took almost a year to give his award which was held back by the union government for another four months. It was released in May 1987 on the eve of Haryana Assembly elections, as if it was meant to sort out political problems of Congress(I) in that state.

Eradi went into verification of total water including pre-partition use which was never referred to it. It took into consideration 1920-1960 figures, hut not the figures for 1960-86 as these were inconvenient. For instance, the surplus water of Ravi-Beas system was calculated, at 15.85 maf at Indus Waters Treaty of 1960 between India and Pakistan. It never went beyond 15 maf, despite the fact that Indira later increased it to 17.17 maf. Eradi further inflated it to 18.28 maf.

Eradi estimated that Punjab drew 5.406 maf, Haryana 1.620 maf and Rajasthan 6.095 maf as on July 1, 1985. These figures under the Accord constituted the bench marks for further allocations.

Eradi went on to discover or locate 4.613 maf of additional water, raising the total available water from 17.17 to 21.78 maf. In the words of Harkishan Singh Surjeet, the Corn miss ion hoodwinked the masses, as the additional water resources available from the three mountain streams of Uj, Basantar and Bein which flew into Ravi and Pakistan, were seasonal and too fast. These were known and the cost of Rs. 1350 crores to dam to yield only 1. 04 maf was neither practicable nor economical. There were also practical problems of causing floods in holding back water that flowed into Pakistan through Ferozepur.[54]

Eradi treated Rajiv Eongowal Accord as a mere scrap of paper and like Venkataramiah earlier gave it a malicions reconstruction. He, therefore, reduced Punjab's share from 5.405 maf as on July 1, 1985, to 5.0 maf. He preserved Punjab's pre-partition allocation, this brought Punjab's total entitlement to 7.3 maf. He enhanced Haryana's share from 1.62 maf as on July 1,1985, to 3.83 maf, an increase of 240 percent. With the additional water of 3.29 maf already available to it through Yamuna, Haryana's share from the composite Punjab rose to 7.12 maf; this put it at per with Punjab, a much bigger state. Rajasthan's share also got enhanced from 6.083 maf as on July 1, 1985, to 8.60 maf.[55]

Eradi violated the nationally and internationally accepted principles of rights of riparian states over its water resources. The surplus water, if any, of Punjab can be made available to other states against a consideration. By incredible estimates, and dubious statistics, Eradi with malice aforethought complicated matters, instead of resolving them.

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Now, we may turn to the fifth Commission that was upshot of the Rajiv-Longowal Accord. The terms of reference of Justice Ranganath Misra, a sitting judge of Supreme Court, who was entrusted on April 26, 1985, to enquire into 'organised violence' in Delhi, were extended to cover Kanpur and Bokaro (and later Clias Telisil) in Bihar under the Accord.

Misra was witness to the anti-Sikh carnage in Delhi. He was aware of findings of PUDR and PUCE, the work of volunteers of Nagrik Ekta Manch published in November 1984 itself under the title "Who Are the Guilty?" and the findings of a high powered non-official Commission of enquiry headed by retired Chief Justice of Supreme Court. S.M. Sikri. The reports had courageously blamed the leading lights of Congress(I) for organising the anti-Sikh carnage to 'teach the Sikhs a lesson'. Misra was also aware of Rajiv's alibi for the riots, and his extreme reluctance to hold an enquiry in the face of brazen allegations and eye witness reports. Right from the beginning, it was clear to him that the government wanted him to do a whitewashing job.

The Commission attracted a plethora of organisations. On the one hand was the Citizens Justice Committee (CJC) formed by various civil rights groups including the Nagrik Ekta Manch, the PUDR, the PUCE, the Sikh Forum and the Citizens for Democracy, On the other were malignant group like Citizens Committee for Harmony represented by Shyamala Pappu of Congress(I), the Vidhi Chetna of Usha Kumar, a central government counsel in Thakkar Commission's enquiry into Indira's assassination, and the Citizens Forum for Truth represented by a lawyer R.K. Gupta. Then there were the Shiromani Akali Dal, the Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee and the Arya Samaj. Right from the beginning, the question arose about safeguarding the victims of the riots who were too scared from intimidation and harassment. The CJC brought to the notice of Misra various cases of intimidation. Instead of conducting enquiry through his own team of police officers, he passed it on to the Delhi Administration. These landed on the tables of the very inspectors and sub-inspectors who had initially held the threats! Misra when questioned showed his jaundiced outlook when he said, "These are fantasies you are dealing with."[56]

The CJC did a commendable job in securing more than 6,000 affidavits. Whereas these were subjected to cross examination, CJC's request for copies of affidavits of those named were turned down, and even their identity withheld. Its requests for vital police reports were refused and pleas for summoning nine senior officials responsible for maintenance of law and order during the period were turned down. The holding of the proceedings in camera added to the complications. The CJC felt that "This has been a one-sided investigation" and on March 31, 1986, withdrew from the Commission.[57]

The victims case thereafter was represented by Akali Dal and the Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee.

Because of the overwhelming evidence, Misra was forced to concede that "violence in Delhi was indeed organised" and "that the pattern followed at Kanpur and Bokaro was the same."[58] How 3 could anti-social elements as suggested by him have synchronised such violence and the pattern at vastly distant places in so short a time is beyond comprehension.

Not aware of the *Operation Shanti*. Misra went on to add that "in such a short time. . . no planning could have been done. Thus the stand that violence was organised is difficult to accept." Nonetheless, he conceded that "in these mobs people with sympathy for Congress (I) and associated

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with the party activities appear to have joined in good number." Then, he gratuitously offered alibi for Congress(I) party "at the lower level" having "loose ends", and that "such participation was not on party basis". He added that "it seems to be a fact that a number of people belonging to the Congress(I) party at the lower level had participated in the riots."[59]

How did Misra account for Congress(I) M. P's, Member of Metropolitan Council and Municipal Committee besides the leaders of Youth Congress being "lower level" party functionaries? Reading in between the lines, one gets the feeling that Misra did come across impeccable evidence of Congress(I)'s participation at all levels on a massive scale in planning, organising and manning the riots, but; his courage failed him. He was a committed judge who had sold his conscience. H.S. Phoolka convener of CJC aptly termed the Misra report farcical.[60]

Misra placed "the major part of responsibility" for the riots on the police, besides anti-social elements and Congress(I) workers. He desisted "from making any assessment of the allegations implicating individuals" and washed off his hands by recommending constitution of a committee of at least two persons - one judicial and one administrator - to look into the papers and give directions for prosecution.[61]

Misra report was withheld for a considerable period before it was partially released. Its second volume is still held back.

After a great deal of wrangling, Kusum Lata Mittal did identify Congress(I) leaders including the then M.P.s, police officers and other individuals who should be prosecuted for their acts of omission and commission.[62] Because of political pulls and pressures, malfeasance of some judges of Delhi High Court, including the anti-Sikh penchant that characterise the society and has come to influence all echeleons of government including the judiciary, nothing practical has been achieved in that direction. Cry for justice remains unheard.

A written Accord with all it comas and full stops, signed in a most solemn ceremony, was rendered useless. Not a single Article was implemented in its true spirit including article 2 on recruitment to army based on merit. Even Misra Commission noted the distinction in terms of its reference, viz, to inquire into "the incidents of organised violence" in Delhi vis-a-vis "the disturbances which took place in the Bokaro Tahsil, in Chas Tehsil and at Kanpur." When the issue of All India Gurdwara Act came up, the view of unregenerate Darbara Singh and *tankhahya* Buta Singh prevailed that it was too dangerous a proposal, subversive of Congress ideals to break Akali hegemony over the Gurdwaras." It was unceremoniously shelved. So was the Accord.

To resume now the narrative from the capture of Akal Takht and the Golden Temple complex by Damdami Taksal and the AISSF:

At the instance of the SGPC and Akali Dal, Jathedar Kirpal Singh and four other head priests called *Surbat Khalsa* meeting on February 16, 1986, at Amritsar. Since negotiations with Damdami Taksal showed little progress, the venue was changed from Amritsar to Anandpur Sahib. Meanwhile on February 4, the police and CRPF under Mohammad Izhar Alam, an over-enthusiastic Superintendent of Police, Jalandhar, acted brutally in killing four from an AISSF procession at Nakodar and cremated the bodies instead of handing them over to their families. A hapless Barnala could only transfer few police officers, instead of suspending some of them. This was a signal for militants to retaliate. There was general upsurge of insensate violence. A number of killing squads

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arose. Admitted an official, "Most of them operate on their own now, in small bands, making our job even more difficult". Besides, there was greater element of surprise in extremist activity, so much so that Bhai Mohkam Singh of Damdami Taksal and Harinder Singh Kahlon convener of the AISSF condemned violence in the state.[64]

The rubble of the demolished Akal Takht yielded a rich crop of meat bones, earthen piece of *chillums*, razor blades etc - all thrown by troops sacrilegiously into the building material at the time of construction under auspices of Baba Santa Singh.

At the *Sarbat Khalsa* of February 26, 1986, at Anandpur Sahib attended by over 200,000 people, Giani Kirpal Singh contended that "non-believers and naxalites had infiltrated these bodies (Damdami Taksal and AISSF) to implement the old conspiracy of finishing off the Sikh religion. Sikh youth are being killed and Akali leaders are their special target. They want to usurp the SGPC which the Sikhs got after great sacrifice." While Tohra announced his resignation, Badal warned against any move to send the police into the temple complex, as that would inflame the Sikh opinion in Punjab and finish off Akali Dal. Barnala to the glee of his central mentors disagreed and asserted, "The rod is the only answer now for those spoiled boys. If we don't send the police now, tomorrow the army will have to go."[65]

Congress(I) leaders started harping on the growing violence in Punjab. Small violence was splashed disproportionately in the news papers and on the TV. Barnala blamed Border Security Force for letting in from Pakistan scores of young men through Punjab and Rajasthan borders. Gursharan Singh, noted Marxist playwright in his political plays, and in the editorial of his monthly *Samata*, too thought that Pakistan was behind the violence in the state; he was clear that they were not associated with Damdami Taksal and the AISSF. The police sources despite confessions about Pakistan's involvement blamed the Taksal and the AISSF but had no concrete evidence.

The five member council of Damdami Taksal and AISSF in February-March 1986 repeatedly condemned killings. The question that agitated the mind of thinking people was, apart from the mysterious hand of Pakistan, who was behind the violence in Punjab? Sanjeev Gaur of the *Sunday* hit the nail on the head when he recalled, "A keen Punjab-watcher's" apprehension, "That even a central lobby which is against the present Akali government in Punjab could be backing the terrorists in the sinister move."[66] And, the activisation of Shiv Sena - no kin of Bal Thackarey's organisation of the same name in Maharashtra - in urban areas of Punjab with an eye to gain from the communal clashes could also be attributed to this very lobby. Suman Dubey of *India Today* was emphatic that, "The BJP eyes the rise of Shiv Sena with distaste". He quoted Hit Abhilashi to say," We cannot champion only the Hindus, as violence has hit both the communities."[67]

Congress(I) leadership had no compunctions in playing up the communal card. The series of incidents from mid-February to the third week of March at Batala marking the rise of Hindu militancy - roughing up of College going Sikh boys from rural areas on February 19, Shiv Sena activists' detonation on March 15, 1986, of two crude bombs, one of which hit the Gurdwara, and their attack on the police station the following day when they fired weapons and threw seven crude bombs - were sinister in content. The sharpened *trishul* became the normal wear of the Hindus, united under the flag of 'Om'. The partisan behaviour of the CRPF and the rumours of death of a granthi (he had only been roughed up) yielded unexpected results: a *gherao* of the town by rural Sikhs from March 19, 1986, to prevent milk and vegetables reaching the town. It lasted four days.

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Curfew had to be imposed for a fortnight. The publicity given to various incidents in the press and TV tended to play up the communal divide.

Another catalyst to encourage these elements was the march to Chandigarh, to gherao the Assembly, of Baba Joginder Singh whose United Akali Dal had been eclipsed by Damdami Taksal and the AISSF. The death of his son Jagjit Singh Rode in mysterious circumstances on March 17, 1986, helped to swell the marchers to more than 3,000 strong. Chandigarh Administration and Punjab Police, bungled in handling the situation. Two people were killed in the police firing.[67]

By the end of March, the gunning down of a Communist Party of India legislator in Amritsar district and of the RSS workers at Dresi Ground Ludhiana - the first such attacks on leftists and RSS workers in years - created congenial atmosphere for the central government to launch its new policy in Punjab. The sudden and unannounced change of Shankar Dayal Sharma, Governor of Punjab, and induction on April 1, 1986, of Siddharath Shankar Ray who had earlier crushed Naxalites in Bengal, as the new Governor without consulting Barnala, was one step. The other was the induction of the super-cop Julio Francis Ribeiro of Maharashtra cadre as Director General Police, Punjab, (he was also head of the CRPF and the BSF) around the same time. These were indicative of the union government's resolve to crush the Sikhs. That was also a notice to Barnala to play to the tune or Ray could take over the administration and Governor's rule imposed.

Hardly had Ribeiro taken over that the militants gave him a taste of their prowess. In early April 1986 at Jalandhar they killed half a dozen policemen on the spot, maimed another four and set free three of their colleagues involved in Ramesh Chandra's killing, outside the court of Additional Sessions Judge; they passed by atleast six CRPF posts before escaping.[68] Ribeiro spoke of bullet for bullet policy but needed time to rally his forces. The interregnum could be used to break Akali Dal and its majority in the legislature. The union government was now looking towards a 'big act' on part of the militants.

The emissaries of a Union Minister manoeuvred with Baba Joginder Singh, with whom Baba Gurdev Singh, 'acting jathedar' of Akal Takht was aligned, to make a declaration of Khalistan from Akal Takht at the *Sarbat Khalsa* on Baisakhi, April 13, 1986. The former demurred, while the latter instead offered his resignation at the *Sarbat Khalsa*. It was turned down.[69] Baba Joginder Singh said he could think of doing so around June 4, the second anniversary of the Operation Bluestar. That was not acceptable to the union government which wanted to hasten the declaration.

Now, considerable financial clout of the World Sikh Organisation(WSO) headed by Bhullar, was brought to bear on the self-constituted five-member Panthic Committee consisting of Arur Singh, Dhanna Singh, Wassan Singh Zafarwal, Gurbachan Singh Manochahal and Gurdev Singh Usmanwala "to announce Khalistan without further ado". Raminder Singh of *India Today* continues," the WSO's Chandigarh based contact man, a retired bureaucrat, spent sometime with the committee members. His reasoning prevailed and the Committee advanced the date to April 28. But Delhi newspapers were on strike that day, so the date was postponed to April 29."[70]

Harbir Singh Bhanwar in the daily *Ajit* (Jalandhar) of May 14, gives a graphic description as to how the declaration of Khalistan was made on April 29, 1986, from room number 46 of *parikarma* of Darbar Sahib at 11.30 a.m. Some of the five member committee had their beards tied up and were wearing pants and bush shirts. They changed their dress to white *cholas*, round *kesri* turbans like that of Bhindranwale, untied their beards to let them flow, and put white or *kesari dushalas*

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around their neck. Then a 10 page declaration, believed to have been vetted in Buta Singh's office, on the pad of '*panthic panj membri committee*' (panthic five member committee) without a date was distributed to press reporters and others. The statement that Khalistan had come into being was amended to read that "the fight for Khalistan has begun". Delhi was to be the capital of Khalistan; non-Sikhs were to have the same rights as the Sikhs.[71] Its territory was to be defined. [Later in 1988, at was clarified that whole of India minus Kashmir was to form Khalistan]. Side by side with the declaration a host of militant set ups with high sounding names were set up by various members.

After the declaration, four of the five members rerolled their beards, changed to safari suits and mixed with the crowd. All of them disappeared from the Golden Temple complex.

Barnala then attending the National Development Council (NDC) meeting in Delhi was caught unawares. Rajiv on getting the expected flash adjourned the NDC meeting and closeted himself with his close advisers. He wanted Barnala to take police action or resign. [72] Barnala caved in for the former course. Rajiv at the time was well aware that the five-member committee which made the announcement had left the Golden Temple complex. But it gave him the opportunity to, firstly, justify the Operation Bluestar and, secondly, split Akali Dal.

By afternoon, a captive Barnala accompanied by Arun Singh, Minister of State for Defence, Congress(I) Vice President Arjun Singh, a Major-General of National Security Guards(NSG) and top officials of Home Ministry were flown by special aircraft to Amritsar. Julio Ribeiro was already there. It was decided that three companies of NSG in 'Operation Search' would flush out the 'terrorists' from the Golden temple complex the following early morning.

The complex was surrounded on April 30, 4.30 a.m. by the police and the CRPF. The commandos then entered the temple complex firing in the air. There was no resistance. Still they killed two innocent persons. Of the 378 persons rounded up, only 233, mainly belonging to Taksal and the AISSF were detained. Reibero conceded 'No one of note was caught'.[73]

Barnala at the Cabinet meeting at Chandigarh on April 30, lasting from 12.30 to 15.00 hours had the declaration of Khalistan condemned. He did not have the courage, moral or other, to tell his colleagues of the ongoing police action in the Golden Temple, Amritsar. On hearing of it, Sukhjinder Singh, Amarinder Singh and Sucha Singh Chhotepur resigned from the Cabinet. Badal and Tohra resigned from Akali Dal Working Committee. Akali Dal split. A group of 27 Akali MLAs and 4 of the 7 MPs got recognition as separate groups. Tohras men, however, continued in Barnala ministry.

Already Governor Ray had come to the rescue of Barnala. On the evening of April 30, he rallied Congress(I) and other opposition parties to pledge their support to Barnala in case of the expected split of Akali party.[74] Barnala was now a lame duck Chief Minister, dependent upon the crutches of Congress(I) Assembly party. He inducted 21 new members in the cabinet, promoted two to cabinet rank, and offered the rest lucrative chairmanships of the public sector corporations. He dangled the offices of profit to those who had joined Badal, to no effect.[75]

Rajiv in appreciation immediately in May 1986 kicked Buta Singh high to Union Home Ministry. He took up the task with zeal and got lifetime's opportunity to settle his old scores.

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The post-Operation Search period saw a triangular interplay of forces of Sikh militancy, Hindu revivalism and state terrorism, with the latter two hands in glove with each other, to fix the Sikhs. Firstly, the militants obviously stepped up their activity over a limited area and sought to annihilate both the Hindus and the Sikhs opposed to them. In Krishan Nagar, Amritsar, on May 21, 1986, they shot anyone looking like a Hindu; a Sikh who appealed to them not to kill innocent people was also shot dead after being told: "There is no place for Hindu lovers."[76] Adds Gobind Thukral of *India Today*, "The small minority of middle ground leaders in the Damdami Taksal or the All-India Sikh Students Federation such as Harinder Singh Kahlon, who oppose the cult of killing are getting isolated."[77] The unrelated incidents of violence were played up. As Barnala stated, the violence in Punjab was overstated.[78] No attempt was made to differentiate between extremists and militants, and militants and terrorists. All the Sikhs were brushed with the same paint.

Secondly, the sharpened *Trishul*, which showed itself at Batala in March last, formed part of the menacing Hindu revivalism in all parts of India. On the basis of bureau reports, Inderjit Badhwar of *India Today* wrote, "The clarion call to Hindu nationhood. . . has found credence and acceptability among the unlikeliest of people; people who are banding together for the first time under one saffron banner. . . It is response of a people who are not at peace."[79] It had a sinister impact on Punjab and the Sikhs in India. In Punjab, there was a clear schism between the Hindus and the Sikhs in cities where the Hindus are in majority. As Kewal Verma put it, "Hindu has become increasingly communal and Hindu-Sikh divide has widened."[80] This resulted in communal clashes in Patiala, Ludhiana, Jalandhar, Nakodar, Batala and Amritsar cities where curfew became a part of life. At places, the Sikh shops and houses were ransacked. The Sikhs as a result started moving out of the Hindu dominated localities. Side by side, the Hindus in Himachal Pradesh, Haryana and Delhi indulged in violence against the Sikh life and property as part of backlash of militants' killing of the Hindus, e.g., in a bus at Mukatsar on July 25, 1986. The police also killed three Sikhs at Delhi standing up to the Hindu mobs. Because of Hindu revivalism, "the migration to Punjab is picking up" with the Sikhs from Delhi, Kanpur, Patna and Haryana seeking to buy property in Punjab cities." The future of the Sikhs outside Punjab was "beset by fear and doubts". Raminder Singh of *India Today*, who conducted a special survey in August 1986 to gauge the feelings of the Sikhs outside Punjab, quoted Nidharak Singh of Bombay to add, "The Hindus in Punjab have only the terrorists to fear as no Sikh mob in the state has attacked the Hindus. We face the prospect of ordinary people around us becoming mobs."[81] There was cowardicing by a section of the Sikhs in places like Delhi, where some of them clipped off the *keshas* of their school going children, to give them security. Hindus felt elated.

Lastly, the state terrorism with Ribeiro as its fountainhead in Chandigarh and getting directions from *tankhahya* Buta Singh-headed union Home Ministry,[82] raised its ugly head to engulf the Sikhs and Sikh values. To begin with, Ribeiro prepared a hit list of 38 A category or 'top terrorists', with a B category list of 400 to be liquidated without the due processes of law. Reprehensibly, Barnala himself gave Ribeiro a list of 60 youth from Gurdaspur District for summary elimination. Also, worst type of torture of the Sikh youth at Ladha Kothi in Nabha took place under his very nose.[82a]

The handing over of Amritsar and Gurdaspur districts to the trigger happy CRPF and BSF respectively, to flush out the militants, had its twofold impact. One, it made the militants to shift their activity to Hoshiarpur, Ludhiana and Sangrur districts apart from some other parts of Punjab. Two, in the surcharged communal atmosphere with the Hindus in cities and towns up in arms

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against the Sikhs, it signalled to the Hindus all over Punjab to approach local CRPF units to have shot any Sikh with whom they had a personal grudge or dispute.[83]

Shekhar Gupta of *India Today* records its small beginnings in end June.

a) In Chandigarh a Hindu lawyer had an altercation with a young Sikh client and started shouting that terrorists had come to kill him. The youth was shot.
b) In village Rupewal near Nakodar, a Harijan tried to filch some water melons from a Sikh farm. He was thrashed by farmer's son. The Harijan approached the CRPF and had shot the Sikh farmer and his son as terrorists. The villagers were up in rage and the Punjab Police registered a case of murder.
c) Punjab police in Amritsar openly accused the CRPF of 'murdering' Harminder Singh Shammi, a small time Sikh leader." The prevalent communal cleavage affected Punjab Police and CRPF who openly clashed in the streets of Amritsar. The Punjab Police registered a case against the CRPF for dacoity while the CRPF lodged an identical First Information Report against the Punjab Police.[84]

The distraught union Home Ministry brought in K.P.S. Gill, an Assam cadre officer, as Inspector-General of the CRPF; he also concurrently headed the unified command of local police and the BSF. Gill excelled Ribeiro in serving the cause of the South Block. With Ribeiro assuring quick distribution of 'rewards' held on 'terrorists', security agencies started getting extra-payment for killing of the Sikhs. By end July 1986, the CRPF started killing relatives of 'top terrorists', of course, in false encounters.[85]

The first to use the term 'state terrorism' in this phase was Barnala's Minister of State for Home, Kanwaljit Singh, who visited Batala area in June and was grilled by 200 Sikh villagers.[86] Revenue Minister Major Singh Uboke dismissed the massive 'Operation Mand' launched amidst fanfare in early August to smash Khalistan's headquarters as 'Operation Fraud' or 'Operation *Pakhand*' (charade). He contended at a Cabinet meeting that "innocent Sikhs and even women" were being harassed and tortured by the security forces. This resulted in Barnala's unsavoury meeting with Ribeiro who refused to relent.[87] Uboke legitimately asked, "Is he (Ribeiro) superior to Barnala's government?" Obviously, yes. "This is police *raj*" lamented Uboke.[88]

The anguish of Punjab Ministers had its counterpart in Badal, Sukhjinder Singh, Baba Joginder Singh and others rallying the Sikh masses against the oppressive state machinery. They attended *bhog* ceremonies of those killed in false encounters by police and security agencies. This gave a fillip to *amrit prachar* and those taking the Sikh baptism straightway came under police surveillance.[89] Badal was emphatic that Ribeiro "is increasing terrorism and State terrorism is the worst type of terrorism."[90]

The amateurish, lone ranger, attempt on Rajiv Gandhi by Karamjit Singh with a *katta*, or sawed shotgun, on October 2, at Rajghat, Delhi, was followed by a considered attempt the following day on Ribeiro at the impregnable Punjab Armed Police Headquarters, Jalandhar.[91] Earlier in August, the militants had despatched Gen. A.S. Vaidya, Army Chief at the time of Operation Bluestar. Though Ribeiro was only bruised in the right arm, it put a silencer at his loudmouth and made him more circumspect.

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Though militants met a series of setbacks with more than a quarter of Ribeiro's A and B hit lists being eliminated, there was no let up in militant activity. Even the killing of individuals showed a pattern. On eve of *Diwali*, the extremists of Damdami Taksal and AISSF honoured publicly the relatives of Indira assassins, as also those of other martyrs at Manji Sahib hall in the Golden Temple complex. At the *Sarbat Khalsa* on Diwali, November 1, 1986, they appealed to Amnesty International to expose the fake encounters resorted to by the police and security agencies to eliminate the Sikh youth.

The contradictory postures of union government soon put Punjab back to square one to the discomfiture of Ribeiro. Buta Singh to spite at Barnala helped Tohra to get elected as SGPC president on November 30. The same day militants massacred 24 Hindu bus passengers on Jalandhar-Pathankot highway. This caused furore in Hindi belt. And, Tohra announced disbanding of Special Security Force raised for protection of the Sikh shrines after Operation Search in April last. That caught Buta Singh on the wrong foot. Tohra, Badal and a host of other Akalis were held under preventive detention.[92]

When Buta Singh was interplaying one section of Akalis against the other, his Minister of Internal Security, Arun Nehru, (dropped on Oct. 22) was conspiring with his intelligence set up to fix Buta Singh. He chose his target one Kuldip Kaur, a British national and wife of a Conservative Party leader in Greater London. On arrival in October 1986 at Delhi's International Airport, she got VIP treatment; she was received at the tarmac of the aircraft by a car sent by Buta Singh. Now, at the time of her departure, in November, she was detained under TADA on trumped up charges. Buta Singh under stress spoke in Lok Sabha the Gandhian truth when he flatly denied the considerable family relationship between his family and that of Kuldip Kaur. Margaret Thatcher's intervention with Rajiv Gandhi brought about her release the following April.

In a review of 1986, Inderjit Badhwar and Prabhu Chawla of *India Today* observed that militancy which was earlier confined to Amritsar and Gurdaspur, had spread to Hoshiarpur, Jalandhar, Ludhiana and Faridkot. It "has now assumed the trappings of an insurgency. . . . Its base continues to grow. . . The state's Chief Secretary and Home Secretary have not been involved in a single important decision for several months." Further that, "The police option had neither mitigated the communal divide nor brought down terrorist killings, nor elevated the morale of the police and the confidence of the people." The sporadic killing of innocent villagers by the CRPF and the BSF with the Home Ministry refusing to order inquiries "had given the impression that the security forces are accountable to nobody for their action". That had forced the 'boys' to form "revenge squads", and put content into folk singers' emotional songs to the Khalsa "to rise and fight as was done during the Mughal and the Ahmad Shah Abdali period."[93]

Seema Mustafa made an independent assessment for the weekly *Sunday* (Calcutta) during the same period and wrote: "The people tend to look at an attack on militants as an attack on their religion."[94]

The Khalistan Commando Force (KCF) for the first time in January 1987 owned up some of the killings in the state. As a matter of fact, the KCF was given a new shape by Sukhdev Singh alias Sukha Sipahi alias General Labh Singh who appointed half a dozen 'Lt. Generals' independent of each other, with each of them having 'area commanders'. The Ludhiana bank robbery of Rs. 5. 7 crores (57 million) gave it a big boost. Conveniently, the police initiated the policy to eliminate, to begin with, A grade militants, in cold blood and give out that they had "escaped from police

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custody". The process began with the elimination of Roshan Lal Bairagi and Manjit Singh Bhindi who reportedly "escaped from police custody" at the Beas Bridge, near Amritsar in early January 1987.[95] The Police also got, by the time, moles planted in militant set ups. It was not long that a senior official at Chandigarh stated that, "The infiltration into the ranks (of KCF and KLF) is far deeper than what they think."[96]

Buta Singh was still caught in contradictions when a climb down by the extremists led to Prof Darshan Singh Ragi, the famous hymnologist, being accepted by the Sarbat Khalsa on January 26, 1987, as 'acting jathedar' of Akal Takht. He had been named to the post by the executive of the SGPC on December 24, last, when Giani Puran Singh replaced Giani Sahib Singh as head granthi of the Golden Temple, Savinder Singh replaced Harcharan Singh Mahlon as Jathedar of Takht Kesgarh at Anandpur, Bhai Jaswant Singh replaced Sant Lakha Singh as Jathedar of Takht Damdama Sahib, and Bhai Kashmira Singh replaced Giani Pritam Singh as head granthi of Akal Takht. The last three were leading figures of Damdami Taksal.

Professor Darshan Singh was acceptable to the extremists for his high appraisal of Sant Bhindranwale and also to the moderates because he fell short of Khalistan as a sovereign state. After his selection by the SGPC, he was in the forefront in highlighting the atrocities of the CRPF on the villagers of Brahmpura in Amritsar district on the night of December 27, 1986.[97]

Prof. Ragi was a man in a hurry. He sought to win over the militants' confidence, bring about the unity to form one Akali Dal and one AISSF. That would be a stepping stone to formulation of a minimum programme which the community could wrest from the centre and pull itself out of the morass.

On February 3, 1987, the five headpriests, headed by Prof Ragi 'dissolved' all factions of Akali Dal including the ruling Barnala's Akali Dal (Longowal). They wanted all office holders to resign by February 5. Earlier in end December, he had held separate secret confabulations with Barnala's number two, Balwant Singh, and Amarinder Singh (while Tohra and Badal were in detention). They had encouraged him.

Barnala demurred but denied Buta Singh's statement that the Centre had asked him to stand firm.[98] The headpriests appealed directly to the MLAs and party officials to resign by 5 p. m. on February 8. Barnala hoodwinked his MLAs and party officials by saying that he was sending his resignation to the priests. The party General Secretary and Agriculture Minister Harbhajan Singh Sandhu was closeted with Prof. Darshan Singh Ragi on February 8, and placed the services of Akali Dal (Longowal) at the disposal of the priests. Barnala disowned Sandhu for overstepping his authority. Ragi announced Barnala's excommunication and called on all Akali Dal (Longowal) Ministers, MLAs, party office bearers to appear before Akal Takht on February 14, by 12 noon. Only 4 members including Sandhu responded.

Prof Ragi stated that Barnala was held back by the "remote control from Delhi".[99] He was not far wrong. Twice Rajiv and Congress(I) Vice President Arjun Singh personally assured him of their support in defying Akal Takht. The Union Government threw a bait that it would soon "announce a timetable for transfer of Chandigarh as well as the orderly release of the innocent Sikhs detained in Jodhpur jail".[100] Buta Singh too orchestrated his support to Barnala who organised a massive convention at village Longowal on February 20,1987; it rejected the edict excommunicating Barnala.

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This partly checkmated Prof. Ragi whose guidelines for the new party specified that "Its goal was to secure special rights for the Sikhs in accordance with the provisions of the Anandpur Sahib Resolution."[101] Significantly, Gurjit Singh of the AISSF who recognised authority of Akal Takht in an interview stated, "We must have our own 'Pradhan' (President), own 'Vidhan' (Constitution) and own 'Nishan' (flag)." In the very next breath he amplified, "India can only retain four things: defence, railways, postal communications and currency. We cannot talk on the basis of anything short of it." He added, "It is Delhi which wants us to ask for Khalistan."[102] In short, he was asking for a system of government within the parameters of the Cabinet Mission Plan on the basis of which the power was transferred to the two dominions of India and Pakistan in 1947.

The President's praise of Barnala, despite his personal reservations, in his address to the joint session of Parliament in February 1987 formed part of union government's empty gestures to Barnala. The Centre placed much credence on Ribeiro's initial success in piercing through the militant organisations. The betrayal of Dhanna Singh, founder member of the Panthic Committee (because of his high connections he was made to escape to USA) and wiping out of entire families of militants were some of the immediate results. The police drew blank as to the organisation, method of operation or main ideologues behind the movement. A frustrated Ribeiro stated that it would be a longdrawn struggle. It was beyond him to wipe it out; he only sought to control it. He also started showing better appreciation of socio-political issues involved.[103]

The completion of Sunil Dutt's *Mahashanti Padyatra*, aimed inter alia at separating the Sikh fight against the Mughal type of tyranny in Punjab from "the hatred among Hindus and Sikhs"[104] on Baisakhi, April 13,1987, also saw the emergence of social reform movement or cultural revolution sponsored by the Khalistan Commando Force. The 13-point code of conduct had many positive points to commend. It wanted baptised Sikhs to live upto the Guru's commandments, no intoxicants including spirits, tobacco and opium (either buying or selling), no disrespect to hair, no dancing or *filmi* music at weddings, no marriage party of more than 11 persons, no dowry, no fraternistation with Radhasoamis by the Sikhs, no school uniforms that are not saffron for boys, black and white for girls, no extraction of ransom or blackmail money, no bribe giving or taking. It also prohibited selling of meat or killing of animals that had distinct Damdami Taksal or Akhand Kirtani Jatha imprint on it. Above all, it warned those who served as informers against the militants and indulged in looting of the Sikh houses at the instance of police and other malpractices. (This part could be objected to by the authorities as it dried up their sources). It had its immediate impact in both rural and urban areas all over Punjab, especially *majha* and *doaba* areas.[105]

The government panicked and straightaway arrested 500 AISSF workers. This was followed by the arrest of Damdami Taksal partisans. It was reprehensible that Buta Singh, a product of Khalsa College and once an Akali M.P. termed militants enforcing Guru Gobind Singh's edict against smoking of tobacco and trimming of beard or hair - part of the fundamentals of code of conduct of the Khalsa - as fundamentalism and "rabid kind of communalism", and opposed to "secularism". He regarded this attempt, to eliminate the impact of Hinduism on Sikhism, as a sinister move.[106]

By the time, there were two developments that complicated the situation. One, the involvement of Acharya Sushil Muni, the Jain saint to get the Jodhpur detenues released and begin a series of parleys with Prof. Darshan Singh Ragi on the Sikh problem. He was reported to be acting

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on instructions of Prime Minister. Two, Ribeiro's superannuation by end May and his positive refusal to accept extension or reappointment unless he got "the powers of army chief.

Jain Muni's move was fraught with dangerous consequences for Buta Singh who dissociated the government from Sushil Muni-Darshan Singh parleys. He, to complicate the issues, shot a series of three letters from end-April to early-May to Barnala and wanted him inter alia to stop 'amrit prachar' (taking of baptism by the Sikhs) as that, in his words, had "led to the deepening of communal and separatist feelings".[107]

And then, Ribeiro was involved in a running debate with no. 2 in Punjab cabinet, Balwant Singh, who held that Ribeiro's concept of his indispensability was "an imperialist idea and it smacks of dictatorship".[108] Barnala was not in favour of granting any extension to Ribeiro and withheld a formal request to that effect. The union government wanted to use Ribeiro in its campaign against the Sikh people. In order to facilitate that, it dismissed Barnala government amidst a litany of charges and counter-charges when it still enjoyed majority support in the legislative assembly. President's rule was imposed on May 12, 1987. The forthcoming elections in Haryana were unnecessarily orchestrated by Barnala and the captive media as the reason for that. The release of Eradi Commission report on sharing waters obviously favouring Haryana on the eve of Haryana elections as another trump card proved a joker, and led to Congress(I)'s humiliation at polls. It secured five seats in a house of 90. Devi Lal of Lok Dal was in the top gear.

The sort of things to follow in Ray-Ribeiro regime in Punjab could be discerned from the fact that Barnala's minister and head of party's youth wing, Prem Singh Chandumajra was immediately arrested and tortured: "he was hung upside down and beaten."[109] The police was tight lipped.

Punjab was soon subjected to criss-cross currents. The gun-trotting militants were pursued by gun trotting policeman. And, then there was a group raised by the police to carry on the vendetta against the families of militants and their sympathisers. Ribeiro's greatest contribution was to build up the morale of policemen and motivate, if that is the proper word, a group of men to kill the people for the sake of killing. The bulk of Hindu officers in the police force needed no promptings; the *patit*-Sikhs (Sikh renegades) too proved good stuff to fall in line. The CRPF was by and large a rabidly communal force; like the Purbeas in 1848-49, it got the century's opportunity to undertake large scale massacre of the Sikh youth in the longiasting President's rule.

Ribeiro saw no inconsistency in doling out contradictory figures. For instance, on May 25, 1987, he told the press that, "There were only 100 armed terrorists left in Punjab". Three weeks later on June 16, he stated, "In Punjab, the police has killed or captured 3,318 terrorists in the last 14 months. In one month since President's rule, we have killed or captured 404 terrorists." The group of *India Today* journalists headed by Dilip Bobb observed, "How 100 terrorists increased to 404 reflects either a total failure of police intelligence or the killing of suspects who obviously had not been previously identified as terrorists."[110] Earlier, in January 1986, Ribeiro had given the number of terrorists to be 200 which rose to 450 by April 1986 and now he claimed to have killed 3,318 of them in the last 14 months. Verily, Dilip Bobb continued, "All over Punjab the issue of fake encounters and 'state terrorism' has become an overriding and emotional one." And, "Ribeiro and his police force today have the power- and the image – of an occupation army. . . . Even Congress(I) MLAs who had supported President's rule are disillusioned. . . Police rule has become total repression."[111]

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The militants struck in a big way in Delhi on June 13, 1987, killing 14 people. They followed up by waylaying a bus at Lalru in Patiala district and slaughtered 38 Hindu passengers on July 6, 1987. Labh Singh of KCF claimed responsibility. Within 24 hours followed similar massacre of passengers in two buses in Fatehabad, Haryana, leaving 32 dead. These were believed to be the work of state-terrorist group and were designed to destablise newly established Lok Dal government headed by Devi Lal in Haryana. Devi Lal too talked of a deep rooted conspiracy to destabilise his newly elected government. Significantly, the *Times of India* in front page editorial, also linked it to "the grand destablisation theory favoured by Congress(I) hacks." It raised the query, why strike in Haryana and rhetorically asked "Why make the Chief Minister dependent on the support of the Centre to preserve law and order?"[112]

The deepening of state repression and widening of infiltrators' network forced a reappraisal in militant ranks. Gurbachan Singh Manochahal formed a new Panthic Committee and set up Bhindranwale Tiger Force of Khalistan (BTFK) to carry on the militant work. The KCF, the KLF, the Akal Federation of Sher Singh and two wings of the AISSF took a unified stand to continue the "battle of the sword".[113]

The vitiated atmosphere made Prof. Darshan Singh Ragi irrelevant. He had been overtaken by the events. At no time was the union government willing to enter into a meaningful dialogue with him. As such, his efforts to redefine Anandpur Sahib Resolution or arrive at a consensus on the demands of the community had become redundant. His convening the meeting of moderates on August 4, at Teja Singh Samundri Hall in Amritsar ended in fiasco. The situation had been brewing since the government prevented appropriate celebration of the 3rd anniversary of the Operation Bluestar by imposing curfew in Amritsar in early June. Professor Ragi made virtually a farewell speech on August 4, and shortly afterwards left the field clear for both the angry youngmen or militants, and state terrorists.[114]

Later, he accused some elements in the union government for providing tacit support to some militant factions to play havoc with the established Sikh institutions with a view "to divide and weaken the Sikh *Qaum*". He asserted that the underground leadership of the Panthic Committee was being manipulated by the Centre (through Buta Singh without naming him), and that Manochahal would sooner or later will be exposed. Manochahal on the other hand dubbed Ragi as "a mouthpiece of the Centre."[115]

The four remaining high priests on August 17, called on the various militant organisations - 16 in all - to forge unity. In another statement on September 9, 1987, they appealed to the *Qaum* to lend support to the militants "to break the shackles of slavery" and charged the police with fake encounters. The militants at the time were rather listless. It was in this state of affairs that the Council of Khalistan came into being on October 7, in America with Gurmit Singh Aulakh as President: Dr. Harijinder Singh Dilgeer avers that it was in a way the reiteration of the declaration of April 29, 1986.

In a separate development, the Government of India decided to intervene militarily to suppress Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka. Tavleen Singh mentions of union government's uneasiness at the existence of Sikh Light Infantry (SLI) intact as one of the factors for the decision. SLI was the first to be sent to Sri Lanka and its first units were badly mauled.[117] It was the last come out.

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The *Sarbat Khalsa* convened by the underground Panthic Committee on Diwali, October 21, 1987, was a non-starter. The three high priests aligned with Damdami Taksal were arrested on October 17, under National Security Act. The Golden Temple was besieged by CRPF and the BSF 48 hours before Diwali. The second ring of activists entrenched in the second floor of Akal Takht nevertheless issued text of resolutions adopted at *Sarbat Khalsa* without indicating its venue. These were signed by five members of Panthic Committee - Gurbachan Singh Manochahal, Wassan Singh Zafarwal, Dalbir Singh, Dalvinder Singh, and Kanwaljit Singh. The text of the resolutions was in the hands of Sheetal Das, Deputy Superintendent Police, Amritsar before their being released to the public. That indicated the deep inroads made by the police in militant set ups, if not the interaction between the two.

By the time it came out that Buta Singh at the Centre and Ray-Ribeiro regime in Punjab were working at cross purposes. Their perceptions were different. Ray had direct access to Rajiv, bypassing Buta Singh. He also resisted Buta Singh's efforts to catapult his men in key positions in Punjab administration. Again, their interests clashed in the annual elections for SGPC President. Tohra still in Jail was favoured by Ray-Riberio while Buta Singh reversing his last year's stand now favoured Harcharan Singh Hudiara, a Barnala nominee.[118]

In the fall of 1987, there were a number of groups working against the militants among the people. Mention may be made of the Communist Party of India (CPI), and the Communist Party of India(Marxists) (CPM), cadres who went to the countryside in great enthusiasm. They exposed themselves as likely target by militants to be eliminated. And then, there were Congress(I) sponsored *Sadhbhavana Yatras*, goodwill troupes. These were selective and half-hearted. Last came the whirlwind but extensive tours of Ray and Ribeiro who sought to convince themselves that there were no incidents of state terrorism. Since the people were so terrified, and police credibility so low, nothing much came out of these public relations exercises.[119]

By the end of 1987, in the words of Inderjit Badhwar *of India Today*, "The one thing that stands out in stark relief in Punjab is that civil rights - arrests, detentions, fake encounters - have become a major universal issue. And the ramifications of what is popularly described as the 'gun and lathi raj' are discussed" by all sections of society, "and even police officials". Police had become thoroughly corrupt and "there are reports of wide spread extortion from "innocent persons" arrested on false charges. The manpower pool from which the militants draw fresh recruits "continues to get larger".[120] An indirect offshoot was the growth of militancy in Kashmir following glaring rigging of elections there in 1987. There was nothing new in the people being disfranchised and robbed of their sovereignty. The goings on in Punjab provided them inspiration and hope.

From the beginning of 1988 there was spurt in the orchestrated violence in Punjab. Two alternative plans to solve the problem were on the way.

One, Jain Muni Acharya Sushil Kumar had been approached by Capt. Satish Sharma, closer to Rajiv, to reactivate his peace process. Earlier in May 1987, Sushil Muni had favoured amnesty for the army deserters, release of Jodhpur detenues, probe into the 1984 riots and fake police encounters. He now assisted by Tarlochan Singh Riyasti, former President of Punjab Congress and once General Secretary of the party, planned a crucial meeting with the leading militant groups on January 10, 1988.[121] Two days earlier, Riyasti was assassinated. He had come to know of Buta Singh's links with some of militant outfits and had started talking openly about the havoc which he was playing in Punjab. It was significant that Jathedar Rachhpal Singh, who was close to both Rajiv

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Gandhi and Buta Singh, publicly blamed the latter for getting Riyasti out of the way.[122] That partially derailed Muni Sushil Kumar.

Two, planning for Operation Black Thunder was initiated early in 1988 at Manesar in Aravali hills, 40 kms from Delhi by National Security Guards(NSG) under patronage of union Home Minister, rather Ministry of Internal Security. A large model of the Golden Temple complex was created; also used for practice were a high school at Tauru and a college at Nuh in Haryana whose structures resembled the *parikarma* of the Golden Temple. Weekend visits to the Golden Temple became regular feature of the Special Action Group (SAG) of the NSG. They also started growing their hair for operational reasons.[123]

To vitiate the atmosphere for Sushil Muni's mission, the state sponsored terroristic groups started murderous assaults from end -December 1987 liquidating families of militants and their sympathisers. Their houses were put to fire. The units were placed under the overall charge of Izhar Alam, Senior Superintendent of Police, Amritsar. Ribeiro had certain reservations and conveniently went on leave to Bombay.

Discernible observers noticed the higher degree of media- print and audio-visual - coverage given to these incidents. In the words of Acharya Sushil Muni, "during the earlier terrorist killings there was no TV coverage. But look, how quickly TV crews now reach the scene of the massacre and telecast them in detail all over India."[124] Initially when the news reached the Central Secretariat, people were taken aback at the spurt in violence. But soon, to their relief, they learnt of the agency at work. The militants continued to get the blame in the media. By January 25, 1988, over 200 people had been killed, and even the Sikhs from rural areas started migrating to towns and cities. Ribeiro on return from leave was made to concede that the "terrorists have regained the upper hand".[125]

Sushil Muni appealed to Rajiv on February 5, 1988, to release Jodhpur detenues and the four head priests. "He favoured the idea, but there was tremendous opposition to it from within the government."[126] Rajiv opened out on February 11, 1988, but opposition from within continued. It had its two fold impact. One, leave of SAG of NSG earmarked for Operation Black Thunder was cancel led. Two, it led to a half-hearted measure. Instead of releasing the bulk of Jodhpur detenues retaining only a few, only 40 of them were released in early March. These included Jasbir Singh Rode, Sant Bhindranwale's nephew and the three high priests held since May last.

According to Seema Mustafa of the *Sunday*, "Rode had been given the green signal by the government to offer a Kashmir-like status to Punjab while negotiating with the terrorist groups in the state," and that "Article 370 of the Constitution would be made applicable for (sic) Punjab as well."[127]

Rode needed all the good wishes to sell the proposition to the militants. But a strong lobby at the centre did not want the Rode experiment to succeed, or even to let Rode have grip over the situation. The security agencies under patronage of Union Home Ministry were hell bent to carry on their vendetta. The day (March 4, Holi festival) Rode was released, state-terrorists massacred 34 persons and injured 49 from a mixed crowd of Hindus and Sikhs at Kari-Sari village in Hoshiarpur district witnessing Raslila on Holi at the Thakardwara. The police was present in strength. According to eye withnesses, it withdrew for "more than half an hour" to facilitate the massacre. K.P.S. Gill who oversaw the massacre, was encamped nearby.[128]

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On being released at Amritsar on March 4, Rode skirted the issue of Khalistan but said '*puran azadi*' (full freedom) was the 'goal' of the Sikhs. He added, "It is for the government to decide whether this is possible within the country or outside". And, "The ongoing *dharam yudh* will help them achieve this target."[129]

Sushil Muni interpreted '*puran azadi*' to mean complete independence in religious affairs.[130] Rode two days later too amplified that '*puran azadi for Sikhs*' meant freedom to pursue religious and economic affairs independently. He continued, "We want equality which we have been denied so far" and "If the Indian government considers us irrelevant then it should separate us."[131] The same day, the Punjab Assembly, kept under suspended animation, was dissolved. It was erroneously interpreted as a gesture to the militants. The move was necessitated by the union government's resolve to prevent the election of Simranjit Singh Mann to a Rajya Sabha seat, elections to which were due by end of the month.[132] The following day Buta Singh announced in Parliament, the government's resolve to amend the Constitution to extend President's rule and provide for a state of emergency in Punjab, if needed.

The installation ceremony of Rode on March 9, was used by the NSG officers "at the pickets watching every movement, counting heads, guns and identifying faces". There were around 80 militants inside. From now on "some Officers stopped trimming their beards for the occasional, but vital, walk inside the temple".[133] Not only that, some Hindus with long hair and beards were infiltrated into the militant ranks inside the temple shortly afterwards.

Confusing signals representing union government's fractured policy continued. Rajiv announced on March 11, 1988, the government's preparedness to initiate dialogue with 'all' or 'anyone' on Punjab within the framework of Indian constitution. Rode regarded the high priests as a 'bridge' to be used for meeting between the Centre and the militants. He was still doing tightrope walking when the Centre decided to push through Parliament the Constitution 59th Amendment Bill providing for state of emergency in Punjab, and asphyxiation of the democratic processes in the state. It had to be rushed through before end-March as Congress(I) was to lose some seats in Rajya Sabha in the periodical elections due by then.

To facilitate passage of the Bill in Parliament, the services of state-sponsored terrorists had to be utilised. They were made to propel a Soviet built Rocket Propeller Grenade (RPG) launcher to lob a 2.25 kg, 85 mm shell at the Vishwakarma Temple near Phagwara, housing 70 CRPF jawans. Dhiren Bhagat of *Indian Post* (Bombay) who investigated the import of these Russian RPG launchers from Kabul by Indian Airlines to Delhi Airport by Indian intelligence agency, RAW, observed that "quite incidentally none of the 70 sleeping policemen was hurt."[134] The correspondents of *India Today* observed that "its timing was politically expedient for the Centre. It came when the Union Government was going through embarrassment of pushing the controversial emergency bill through Parliament in the teeth of stiff resistance from the opposition."[135] The bill was passed the following day. Rode had nothing but to be critical of the new measure.

By the end of March, heads of militant outfits warned the people against the government outfits killing the Sikh families and asked their units to use their energies against such outfits. The very next day, April 1, 1988, the state-terrorists gunned down 37 persons in Patti and Tarn Taran subdivisions, including 18 of a family in Penhota village. They mischievously left behind a note on behalf of the K.C.F. claiming responsibility. The official media splashed the ghastly scene. The

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three militant outfits the KCF, the BTFK and the AISSF(Gurjit), in separate statements denied involvement of any of them and described the killings as "the handiwork of police touts".[136] By now the state-terrorist groups had wiped out more than 40 families in Amritsar and Gurdaspur districts.

Punjab was now entering a new phase of state terrorism. The era of kite-flying, as in Rajiv's interview to a British newspaper to grant some special status to Punjab on the lines of article 370 of the Constitution which incidentally received hostile reaction from the national (read Hindu) and communist press, was over.[137] So were the days of Julio Ribeiro who was found to be independently minded and unwilling to carry though the policy of untempered state repression, to which we now turn.

Footnotes:

1. Talks on November 1, 1984, with a RAW Inspector who was present at the airport.
2. Arjan Das was later shot dead by militants for disrespect shown to the holy book.
3. According to Coomi Kapoor, Dharam Das Shastri now asserts "that it was Arun Nehru who gave Delhi Congressmen the green signal for the riots. When queried why it took him so long to mention Nehru's alleged involvement, he says he was in fear for his life earlier when the portly cousin of Rajiv Gandhi was in power." Cf. "Inside Story", *Indian Express*, February 23, 1992.

   Earlier, K.K. Tiwari, Congress(I) Minister at the Centre, had accused Arun Nehru of masterminding the anti-Sikh riots, and "even for assassination of Indira Gandhi". Tavleen Singh, "Unwilling Confessions", *Indian Express*, April 23, 1989.
4. Amiya Rao, et. al., *Truth About Delhi Violence*, (Delhi, Citizens for Democracy, January 1985), p. 3.
5. "The Third Man", *Sunday*. (Calcutta, weekly) November 11, 1984 p. 37.
6. Ritu Sarin in the *Sunday*, May 26, 1985, p. 17.
7. During his return journey from North Yemen, Zail Singh debated in his mind about the succession. He could have inducted Pranab Mukherjee leader of the Congress(I) in Rajya Sabha. He presided over Cabinet meetings in Indira's absence. He had vetted his bio-data stencilled by Press Information Bureau, Government of India, to be distributed immediately on his induction as caretaker Prime Minister. P.V. Narasimha Rao, leader of Congress in Lok Sabha and Prakash Chand Sethi with longest stint as Cabinet Minister could be other nominees. That, he felt, would have caused "a spilt in the Congress party" which he wanted to avoid. And then, "I wanted to repay a part of my debt to Nehru-Gandhi dynasty" by nominating a scion of that family "to the highest office in the land." Cf. Interview with *Onlooker* (Bombay) magazine, UNI despatch in the *Indian Express*, February 18, 1988.
8. *Report of Justice Ranganath Mishra Commission of Inquiry*, Vol. I, p. 11.
9. The peace in Punjab was attributed by Hindus to the massive presence of the army in the province.
10. Amiya Rao, n. 4, p. x.
11. According to knowledgeable sources, the wholesale order for these rods was placed by Congress(I) with a factory owned by a Sikh in Gurgaon in August 1984.
12. CFD, n. 4, p. 23.
13. *NOW* (Monthly magazine), December 1984, p. 25.
14. The correspondents of *India Today* (November 30, 1984) observed "No one failed to notice the absence of the middle class from the, perpetrators of this violence in the very middle class

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areas that it occurred. The sign already was ominous that this was the handiwork of marauders from outside, not a spontaneous outpouring of grief"

According to Citizens Commission, some Hindu neighbours gave shelter to the Sikhs while others refused but did not join in attacking them either. In congested areas, Hindus did point out Sikh homes to miscreants. In poorer areas, Hindu neighbours by and large joined in the attack on the Sikhs, with few exceptions of those extending shelter. "The Delhi Riots; A People's Verdict", *Indian Express*, February 10, 1985.

15. Tavleen Singh, "The Lies of Fanaticism," *Indian Express*, *May* 15, 1988. She wrote that Hindus were oblivious of the fact that during the period of Bhindranwale's stay in the Golden Temple, more than half of those killed in the Punjab were the Sikhs.
16. *Who Are the Guilty?* (Delhi, November 1984), p. 6.
17. Khushwant Singh in "Rajiv Gandhi's Hundred Days", *Probe India*, May 1985, p. 10, puts the deaths in Delhi alone in the first two days at 6,000.
18. That put an end to his aspirations to stand on Congress(I) ticket for Lok Sabha elections from South Delhi constituency, hitherto represented by Charanjit Singh.
19. Khushwant Singh's translation: *History of the Sikhs*, Vol. 2 (Delhi, 1991), p. 391. Following M.K. Gandhi, Khushwant Singh translates *qaum* into race.
20. *India Today*, January 15, 1985, p. 111. That type of intimidation made many Sikhs in Hindu belt to migrate to Punjab.
21. Sanjeev Gaur, "Punjab: One Year After - Special Report", *Sunday*, June 9, 1985, p. 30.
22. Raminder Singh in *India Today*, February 15, 1985, p. 71.
23. Vijay Dutt, "The Capital Conspiracy", *Probe India*, March 1985, pp. 4-10.
24. M.J. Akbar, "The Spreading Kesari", *Sunday*, March 31, 1985, pp. 16-17.
25. *Probe India*, May 1985, pp. 16-25. Giani Kirpal Singh subsequently contended that his statement was torn out of context by *Doordarshan* - Indian TV - to give it an optical illusion.
26. Sanjeev Gaur in *Sunday*, May 19, 1985, p. 54.
27. M. J. Akbar in ibid, p. 18.
28. Surjeet mischievously attributed the motive to extremists. He failed to spot the extremists in Congress(I) who could go to any length to maintain their leadership. *Sunday*, April 28, 1985, p. 32.
29. Gobind Thukral, "Punjab: Damaging Links", *India Today*. July 15, 1985, p. 40.
30. Ibid. That does not reflect on Gurinder Singh's motives.
31. Sanjeev Gaur in *Sunday*, May 19, 1985, p. 31.
32. The Delhi police later came to know of the Congress(I)'s game plan. All those arrested in connection with the bomb blasts were released after a great deal of harassment.
33. *The Sunday* May 19, 1985, p. 20. The issue has various stories, pp. 20-29. A far fetched one suggests an Irish Republican Army link.
34. Sanjeev Gaur in *Sunday* June 9, 1985, p. 31.
35. Zuhair Kashmeri and Brian Me Andrew, *Soft Target: How the Indian Intelligence Service Penetrated Canada*, (Toronto, 1989), pp. 86-89, and ad passim. They, inter alia, mention of the last minute cancellation by India's Consul General, Surinder Malik, of seats on flight AI-182 of his wife and daughter, of Siddharath Singh, Joint Secretary (Americas) in External Affairs Ministry on visit to Canada and returning to India by the very flight, and a host of others closely linked with Malik. Guy Fawkes had planned in 17th century to blow the British Parliament building with gun powder. He, however, warned an M.P., his relative, a day before, not to attend the House of Commons the following day. He was found out and hanged. Surinder Malik, however, was just an instrument. The mastermind lay somewhere else in the Government of India.

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35a. This is not to doubt the sincerity and commitment of the bulk of Sikhs from North America, Europe, India are other parts of the world who joined the WSO because of their feelings of disgust at the events of 1984 in India.
36. Sanjeev Gaur, "Punjab Terrorism on the Rise," *Sunday*, June 16, 1985, p. 32.
37. A part of the song goes on:
Now the attacks have began on the places of worship of brave Sikhs. The forces of oppression have let loose a reign of terror.../ Rise O Khalsa! Set right the oppressor with your might.../Brave Ones! Take up arms and let the enemies' heads roll.../Those whose honour and religious symbols, sacred thread and temples we saved with our blood have a strange way of returning our gratitude.../ They have set tanks and bombs on our beloved Akal Takht and Golden Temple.../ We shall surely return this gratitude as we make a habit of returning all accounts straight. Cf, Gobind Thukral in *India Today*. July 15, 1985, p. 41.
38. Correspondents of *India Today*, August 15, 1985, p. 20.
39. Ibid, p. 27; also, August 31, 1985, p. 23.
40. Emphasis added. Ibid, August 15, 1985, p. 22. Hindus compared it to the Lucknow pact between Congress and Muslim League, *Sunday*, February 16, 1986, p. 22.
41. Gobind Thukral in *India Today*, September 15. 1985, pp. 26-27.
42. M. S. Dhami, "Shift in Party Support Base in 1985 Punjab Assembly Election: A Preliminary analysis" in Gopal Singh, (ed.) *Punjab Today*, (Delhi, 1987), p. 291.
43. Ibid, p. 302.
44. Raminder Singh in *India Today*, October 15, 1985, p. 35.
45. Gobind Thukral in Ibid, November 15, 1985, p. 133.
46. Tavleen Singh, in Ibid, p. 130.
47. Gobind Thukral, "Bains Committee: Lack of Action", *India Today* , January 1986, p. 43.
48. *India Today*, January 31, 1986, p. 24.
49. Ibid, January 15, 1986, p. 40.
49a. S. Viswam, ""The Fallout of the Punjab Accord", *Sunday* January 19, 1986, p. 17.
50. *India Today*, February 15. 1986, p. 32.
51. Ibid, p. 31.
52. Earlier on January 19, 1986. Barnala's impulsive son Gagandeep Singh had led a couple of hundred Akali Dal youth to expel the Taksal and AISSF activists from the complex. In the exchange of fire three *sevadars* of Damdami Taksal were injured. The Akali youth were disarmed and driven out. Following that, on January 21. Tohra had agreed to the joint *kar seva* under the auspices of five revered Sikh saints, viz., Baba Thakar Singh of Damdami Taksal. Baba Harbans Singh of Delhi, Baba Jagtar Singh of Tarn Taran, Baba Uttam Singh of Khadoor Sahib, and Baba Kharak Singh, the octogenarian saint of Amritsar who opted out of *kar seva*. Sanjeev Gaur in *Sunday*, February 2, 1986, p. 33.
52a. Subsequently, this formed the basis of the document issued by the live member committee on April 29, 1986 from the Golden Temple Complex. Cf. Jovcc J.M. Pettigrew, *The Sikhs of the Punjab*, (London/NJ. 1995). pp. 37-36 & 152.
52b. Ibid.
53. Gobind Thukral, "Venkataramiah Award: No Solution", *India Today*, June 30, p. 32.
54. Chandan Mitra. "Eradi Tribunal 'invents' Water", The *Times of India*, May 27, 1987.
55. Ibid; see also the *Spokesman* Weekly, June 8, 1987.
56. *India Today*, November 15, 1985, p. 39.
57. Ibid, 30 April 1986, p. 53.
58. *Report*, n. 8, Vol I, pp. 30, 44, 57, and ad passim.
59. Ibid. pp. 30-31.

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60. *India Today*, August 31, 1987, p. 58.
61. *Report*, n. 8, Vol I, p. 65.
62. *India Today*. August 31. 1987, p. 58.
63. *Ibid*, September 30,1986, pp. 66-67.
64. Sanjeev Gaur, "A State in Turmoil", *Sunday*, March 2, 1986. pp. 50-51: Shekhar Gupta in *India Today*, February 28, 1986, pp. 90-93.
65. Gobind Thukral, "Punjab: Avoiding a Showdown", *India Today*, March 15, 1986, pp. 26-27.
66. *The Sunday*, March 2, 1986, pp. 50-52; *India Today*, April 15, 1986, pp. 30-31.
67. *The Sunday*, April 6, 1986, p. 2.
68. *India Today*, April 30, 1986, p. 48.
69. Harbir Singh Bhanwar in Ajit (Jalandhar), May 14, 1986.
70. Raminder Singh, "Khalistan Declaration: Last Straw", *India Today*, May 31,1986, p. 29. Dalbir Singh told Joyce Pettigrew "I was the author of the document, the creator of its basic fundamentals, and I thought it to be the wrong slogan and wrong path to take and that too at the wrong time." n. 52a op cit.
71. Harbir Singh Bhanwar, "*Inj hoya khalistan da elan*", *Ajit* (Jalandhar) May 14, 1986; Raminder Singh, "Operation Search: Poor Catch", *India Today*, May 31, 1986, pp. 30-31.
72. Khushwant Singh, in *Sunday* May 18, 1986, p. 7.
73. Raminder Singh, n. 70.
74. Khushwant Singh in *Sunday*, May 18, 1986, p. 12.
75. In a stage managed drama, the five priests - some of them restored to their positions thanks to Operation Search - summoned Barnala to appear before Akal Takht for sending police into the Golden Temple complex. The text of summons, Baranala's reply, and of the *hukamnamah* issued by priests were jointly drafted by three prominent intellectuals - Dr. Attar Singh of Punjab University, Manjit Singh an advocate of Punjab and Haryana High Court, and Dr. Gurnam Singh Tir the Punjabi humourist. Barnala subjected himself to punishment on May 17, 1986 by the high priests: to organise *Akhand Path*, dust shoes of pilgrims, etc. It was given out as the second such punishment by Akal Takht of a Punjab ruler, the earlier being that of Ranjit Singh. As the *Statesman* of May 21, in its editorial observed, that did not befool any one. Ranjit Singh did not leave debauchry or Muslim dancing girl Moran after that. Barnala continued to harp that he had not committed any mistake and that "I have not been held guilty". Sanjeev Gaur in *Sunday*, June 1, 1986, pp. 14-16.
76. Tavleen Singh in *India Today*, June 1, 1986, p. 39.
77. Gobind Thukral in *India Today*, June 30, 1986, pp. 27-28.
78. *India Today*, July 15, 1986, p. 28.
79. Inderjit Badhwar, et. al. "Hindu Militant Revivalism", *India Today*, May 31, 1986, pp. 76-78.
80. Kewal Varma in *Sunday*, July 27, 1986, p. 22; Shekhar Gupta in *India Today*, September 15, 1986, pp. 29-30.
81. Raminder Singh, "Sikhs Outside Punjab: A Desperate Dilemma", *India Today*, September, 15, 1986, pp. 86-89.
82. Verily, Finance Minister Balwant Singh said, "There is communalism in Home Ministry bureaucracy. If you want to solve our problem just put the entire Home Ministry on a ship and sink it in the Indian ocean." Shekhar Gupta, "Punjab: An Escalating Crisis", *India Today*, July 15, 1986, p. 27.

82a. Joyce Pettigrew, an 52a pp 44 and 53.

83. n 82, pp. 30-31.
84. Ibid.

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85. They killed two relatives of Usmanwala in Ferozepur in end-July. Shekhar Gupta and Gobind Thukral, "Punjab: On a Short Circuit Fuse", *India Today*, August 15, 1986, p. 52.
86. *India Today* June 30, 1986, p. 29.
87. Shekhar Gupta in *India Today*, August 15, 1986, p. 32.
88. *India Today*, September 30, 1986, p. 32.
89. Gobind Thukral in *India Today*, October 15, 1986, p. 27.
90. Interview, *India Today*, October 31, 1986, p. 73.
91. Ribeiro's wife was injured; one CRPF jawan lay dead and four policemen were injured. *India Today*, October 31, 1986, p. 28.
92. Seema Mustafa and Nirmal Mitra, "Terror Unlimited", *Sunday*, December 14, 1986, pp. 21-29.
93. Inderjit Badhwar and Prabhu Chawla, "Punjab: What Can be Done?" *India Today*, December 31, 1986, pp. 22-30.
94. Seema Mustafa, n. 92. p. 23.
95. Tavleen Singh and Gobind Thukral, "Punjab: Held to Ransom", *India Today*, January 31, 1987, p. 25.
96. Sumit Mitra in *Sunday*, March 8, 1987, p. 33.
97. Avtar Singh Brahma of the village, over the public address system of the local Gurdwara, on December 27, at 10 p.m. for about 20 minutes challenged the local CRPF unit to come out and face him. They did not, till they got reinforcements from nearby village. Then followed a night of terror, after Brahma had left the village.

    It was obvious that CRPF posse had used excessive force and even had molested a woman. A lance naik was demoted two ranks for three years, two increments of head constable were withheld for two years, and third was dealt with in the orderly room by commandant. This was mockery of the rule of law. Cf. Tavleen Singh and Gobind Thukral, in *India Today*, January 31, 1987, pp. 25-27; and Kanwar Sidhu in Ibid, September 30, 1989, p. 35.
98. Raminder Singh in *India Today*, February 28, 1987, pp. 26-30.
99. Sumit Mitra, "Enter the Priests", *the Sunday*, February 22, 1987, p. 24.
100. *India Today*, March 15, 1987, pp. 27-29.
101. Raminder Singh in *India Today*, February 28, 1987, p. 27.
102. Sumit Mitra and Rita Sharma in *Sunday*, March 8, 1987, p. 37.
103. Pradeep Mathur, "The Retreat of Ribeiro", *Probe India*, February 1987, pp. 6-9.
104. Tavleen Singh, "Sunil Dutt: Journey's End", *India Today*, April 30, 1987, p. 44.
105. *India Today*, April 30, 1987, p. 49.
106. Interview with Prabhu Chawla, text, *India Today*, May 31, 1987.
107. Ibid, p. 38.
108. *The Times of India*, May 8, 1987.
109. Tavleen Singh, "Punjab: Discouraging Start", *India Today*, June 15, 1987, p. 68.
110. Dilip Bobb, et al, "The Spectre of Terrorism", *India Today*, July 31, 1987, p. 31.
111. Ibid, p. 37.
112. Cf. *Sunday*, July 1987, p. 15.
113. Vimukh Singh in *India Today*, March 31, 1987, p. 38.
114. Ibid.
115. *India Today*, October 15, 1987, pp. 77; also of October 31, 1987, p. 51.
116. Vimukh Singh in *India Today*, September 30, 1987, p. 43.
117. It was the last to come out after Rajiv government's exit, when India decided to wind up its intervention.
118. Inderjit Badhwar in *India Today*, December 31, 1987, p. 32.
119. Ritu Sarin, "Battle of the Mind", *Sunday*, January 3, 1988, pp. 12-16.

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120. Inderjit Badhwar, in *India Today*, December 31, 1987, p. 32.
121. Sushil Muni's interview, *India Today*, April 30, 1988, pp. 71-73.
122. Rachhpal Singh attributed the motivation to Buta Singh's desire to ward off reconciliation. Also he did not like such a senior Congressman to expose him. *Indian Express*. January 24, 1988.
123. For details. Shekhar Gupta and Vipul Mudgal, "Operation Black Thunder: A Dramatic Success". *India Today*, June 15, 1988, pp. 75-78.
124. Interview, *India Today*, April 30, 1988, p. 72.
125. Interview. *India Today*, February 15, 1988, p. 33.
126. Sushil Muni's interview, n. 121.
127. Seema Mustafa, "Caught in a Tangle", *Sunday*, May 8, 1988, p. 17.
128. Tarun J. Tejpal's despatch in daily *Telegraph*. (Calcutta). March 5, 1988.
129. The *Telegraph*, March 5, 1988.
130. n. 121, op cit.
131. The *Telegraph*, March 7, 1988.
132. Ibid, Mann earlier in 1987 missed the chance, as Barnala under influence of Rajiv, favoured Congress(I)'s Harvinder Pal Singh Hanspal, a Namdhari Sikh, who got elected. Hanspal at the time was threatening Barnala to have the surplus votes cast to him or Rajiv would dismiss his government.
133. "Operation Black Thunder", *India Today*, June 15, 1988, p. 76
134. For full story of import of these launchers from Russian forces in Kabul by RAW in November last, see, Dhiren Bhagat's despatch in the *Indian Post* (Bombay), April 24, 1988.
135. *India Today*, April 15, 1988, p. 48.
136. The *Telegraph* (Calcutta) April 3, 1988.
137. So was the case with Rode's interview with BBC for a settlement within the framework of the constitution if "all the Sikhs' rights" were conceded. Militants like Jagir Singh said that "Khalistan had already been formed. All we need to do is to take occupation". Rode had to deny the statement. Already he was meeting stiff resistance over his move to stop extortions by some militant outfits within the Golden Temple complex. Rode had his supporter in men like Malkiat Singh Ajnala of KCF inside the temple but that was not enough. He was served with a notice to explain in writing his stand on Khalistan within a specified period.

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11
Nights of Long Knives - II
Untempered State Terrorism
(1988-199_)

By the spring of 1988, the Union Government had decided to pursue a policy of cold repression in Punjab. Julio Ribeiro had done a commendable job in steeling the Punjab police as an instrument of state repression. But his opposition to untempered state repression, and publicly airing the need for a political initiative to solve political problems in Punjab, which in his views had their own rationale, was considered an unwelcome forage in matters of state polity. In view of the change in policy, Ribeiro had become irrelevant and was kicked high as adviser to the Governor. He, however, had nothing to do with the administration of police or paramilitary forces.

K.P.S. Gill was inducted as Director General of Punjab Police to oversee the implementation of the new policy. The strings throughout were controlled by the union Home Ministry. Gill's appointment was considered a masterstroke by the anti-Sikh lobby in Delhi as the Centre now had a *native* to implement its policy vis a vis the Sikhs. Gill, a Jat Sikh from Punjab, was an I.P.S. (Indian Police Service) officer of Assam Cadre. Gill's temperament as a cold blooded and heartless fellow was steeled during his service tenure in Assam where he, at the instance of the union government, trampled under foot the human rights and civil liberties of the people of the north-eastern states, in the process, reducing them to third rate citizens. Gill was known to have a single track mind and was deaf to the political goings on. To him any problem, be it in Assam or Punjab, could only be a law and order problem. Nothing more, nothing less. His description of the happenings in Punjab as "purely between Jat Sikhs (militants) and Jat Sikhs (Punjab Police)"[1] typically reflected the state of his mental asphyxiation.

Gill was conceived of, and was ideally suited to serve, what Adolph Hitler had once defined, as a "slave overseer. . . more heartless. . . than any alien beast"[2] in Punjab. He justified the confidence reposed in him by brutalising the police and making it a totally criminalised force functioning outside the pale of the rule of law or the Constitution. He gave the police force the licence to kill the Sikh youth without any qualms. The police set up all over Punjab came right on the top to the detriment of the District Magistrate and judiciary. Magisterial or judicial enquiries into the police brutalities were now out. These arms of the government were completely paralysed with the connivance of the union government.

Already the police was making announcements of 'recoveries' of Russian made RPG Rockets and Russian surface to air missiles, earlier imported by the RAW (Indian external intelligence agency) from Kabul, from all over Punjab.[3] These served as a prelude to pursuit of new policy.

Punjab was by now heading towards the operation 'Black Thunder' which was already under way. As part of Union Home Ministry's instructions, the message had to be conveyed to the mediamen at Amritsar to behave or face the consequences. Kuldip Singh Arora, Amritsar correspondent of United News of India (UNI) was picked up on April 13, 1988, under the National Security Act for meeting militants inside the Golden Temple, a serious charge under the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities Act (TADA). About 100 journalists had so far conducted such interviews.

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This was aptly interpreted by Amritsar's Working Journalists Association to fall in line and not "write anything that displeases it (the government)."[4]

The shift in Rajiv's outlook was obvious when on April 25, he met Barnala for the first time after the latter's dismissal a year ago. He also met Amarinder Singh of UAD who ideologically was closer to Barnala rather than Badal of his own party.

The security forces, by now started establishing themselves on several rooftop pickets, including the one facing the Clock Tower, wherefrom General Sunderji had directed the Operation Bluestar. The security forces during the last couple of months had kept the militants' inside the Temple under observation to prevent their escape. The militants did not take a cue regarding the preparations of the forces outside.[5] In an exchange of fire on April 29, militants had helped a Babbar Khalsa activist to slip out of the hands of the security forces.

The time for Operation Black Thunder arrived after the debate in Parliament on Punjab was over in the first week of May. Despite provocations, there was no firing from inside. To prepare the nation, the state-sponsored terrorists fired on *Gadi Lohars*, a nomad tribe, celebrating marriage at Panipat in Haryana on May 8, killing 13 persons. That served dual purpose of also keeping Haryana Chief Minister, Devi Lal, in check. The following day DIG (CRPF) Sarabdeep Singh Virk chose to take notorious Santokh Singh K-ala, a former militant who was now leading a state-sponsored terrorist outfit alongwith him atop the buildings around the temple. Kala shouted provocatively at the militants. They fired and injured Virk. That set the ball rolling.

Before the Operation Black Thunder could be on, Rajiv had to be convinced. Eleven major meetings were held, with Rajiv being present at eight of them. Home Minister, Buta Singh and Minister of State for Home, P. Chidambaram, carried the day. Rajiv insisted on measures to keep alive the Rode mission.

With the words 'go ahead,' Air Force airlifted Special Action Group (SAG) of 1,000 commandos of National Security Guards (NSG) and their equipment to Amritsar on May 11 and 12. Meanwhile exchange of firing had gone on intermittently. 800 pilgrims had been evacuated on May 10, but recitation of *gurbani* had stopped.

Rode was away to Punjabi University, Patiala, on May 9, and rushed back to Amritsar on hearing of the firing. His move, of a day earlier, to shift from his apartment on the *parikarma* (circumambulation) sandwiched between the firing positions of the CRPF and the militants, to the top of Guru Nanak Niwas, was not taken equanimously by the militants. On May 11, at the instance of Rode a two hour ceasefire was called and his emissaries, Gurdev Singh Kaonke, a former Acting Jathedar of Akal Takht, and three others, visited the militants with food and fruits. Some journalists also went inside and 10 more persons were evacuated. Around this time, the NSG commandos started taking their positions.[6]

The local administration bluffed Rode to take him the following day at 8 a.m. to enter the Temple from Santokhsar Gurdwara to restore rituals. Precisely, at the time, the security forces started firing. Rode, Savinder Singh, Jaswant Singh, Kashmira Singh, Bhai Mohkam Singh and Gurdev Singh Kaonke alongwith 24 others were prevented from proceeding further. After two hours protests, Rode formally decided to move ahead despite the firing. Deputy Commissioner Sarabjit Singh, Inspector General (I.G.) (Border) Chaman Lal and Senior Superintendent Police,

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Suresh Arora were present. Kaonke told the police, "You men are liars. It is you who are shooting, not the militants." He was struck by a CRPF rifle butt. Deputy Commissioner apologised to Rode. The CRPF jawan was rebuked. Rode and his men were formally arrested for violating the curfew.[7] The NSG had completed its build up. The Operation Black Thunder was now formally on.

Late in the night, half a dozen militants tried to break the cordon and were fired upon. Three of them turned back. One was shot dead and two were able to make good their escape.[8] Then followed long exchange of fire between the militants and the security forces. Two Jaguars flew near the temple at the time. The security forces took over Guru Ram Das Serai and neutralised two Bungas.

The authorities applied force with cajolery. The killing of militants by the security forces from outside the temple was supplemented by selective killing inside by the infiltrators. For instance, of all the persons inside, such a senior person as Jagir Singh, spokesman of the Panthic Committee, came out of room 14 to fetch a pail of water from the holy tank. He was shot on the back of the head, obviously from inside and lay on the pavement near the *sarovar*. Side by side, appeals were made on May 13, directly by Deputy Commissioner and Senior Superintendent of Police in the presence of 50 newsmen; and again the following day through Baba Uttam Singh of Khadur Sahib in Tarn Taran asking *sevadars*, women and children to come out. Only half a dozen *sevadars* rushed out of the temple. By the time, 34 militants had been shot dead or seriously wounded.[9]

The authorities met a success on May 15, when in response to repeated appeals by Inspector General (Border) Chaman Lal and Deputy Commissioner Sarabjit Singh to surrender, 151 (according to some sources 146) persons including 17 women and children came out with their hands and weapons in the air. These included some marked militants like Surjit Singh Penta, who according to the official version swallowed cyanide. In the words of Nirmal Mitra of the *Sunday*, "Rumour spread that he had been killed by the police."[10]

In nutshell, a couple of the KCF units and splinter groups of militants had been liquidated.

The goings on in the Temple during the last couple of days had their backlash. The militants of the KCF mowed 30 migrant labourers at a worksite on Sutlej-Yamuna Canal in Ropar district. Gen. Labh Singh of the KCF left a note that others will also be dispatched unless they leave. The labour from Bihar, U.P., Rajasthan and other places made a queueline to get their dues and left. Again on May 20, 45 persons were gunned down in crowded places in Punjab and Himachal Pradesh. Seven powerful bomb blasts hit Pathankot and curfew had to be imposed.[11]

The final denouement was yet to come. 46 person came out from various rooms along the *parikarma* and instead walked coolly into the main temple. They desecrated the temple with their excreta and eventually surrendered on May 18 in response to repeated appeals by K.P.S. Gill who was aware that bulk of them were infiltrators from the security agencies.[12] Media management played up KPS Gill as against the NSG which had to bear it in order to build up the morale of Punjab police.

In New Delhi's South Block the question was raised whether Prime Minister should visit the Golden Temple and seek truce with the Khalsa Panth. After much vacillation, the Home Ministry apprised Rajiv of the state-sponsored terrorists and the massive infiltration that had led to the

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government's gaining a tactical victory. It also put forth the need for a surgical operation to flush out militants from the *Mand*, the wild growth along the belt of river Beas.[13] A furious Rajiv ordered immediate disbanding of state-militants and working out of the Rode option.

The government had initially toyed with various options including winding up of the SGPC. But the fear of the "the mass uprising" forced it to give up the idea. It only led to the idea to create a corridor around the Golden Temple.

In implementing Rajiv's orders, the union Home Ministry played a game of duplicity. It came out as if the rump executive of the SGPC with its top leadership in gaol had reasserted its position by end-May. It held the high priests responsible for desecration of the Golden Temple, and in assertion of its authority dismissed the five high priests headed by Rode, and appointed new ones headed by Harcharan Singh of Delhi.[14] Gill, Chaman Lal and Sarabjit Singh showed that they had tried their best to pressurise the SGPC executive to rescind its resolution. The administration even organised press conference for Rode in Jail Superintendents' room and his statement was circulated by the Punjab Public Relations Department. These moves came under criticism at the hands of BJP and CPM thoughtlessly. Eventually, Governor Ray came out with a statement that the administration would not like to interfere in the SGPC's independence and the Sikh religious affairs.[15] The SGPC no doubt gained in stature, but the real gainer was Buta Singh-led Union Home Ministry.[16] I Verily, it had successfully scuttled the Rode option and willy nilly reduced Rajiv to the position of inanity.

The union Home Ministry had no option but to disband the state terrorist groups. Santokh Singh Kala in his interview in mid-May 1988 with various foreign correspondents including from America and Japan had admitted his role in liquidating scores of militants', families. On the other hand, the "security and police officials" told the *New York Times* correspondent that "the groups' members had not been effective in anti-terrorist operations. . . . They resorted over the months to robbery and extortion."[17] Kala was held in unofficial custody by the CRPF and later liquidated. The vigilante consisting of highly motivated individual killers, continued under Gill's patronage.[18]

The setback suffered by the militants led to the KCF and Babbar Khalsa putting their heads together for the next six weeks or so. A crude bomb blast by end of May 1988 in front of Shivala Bhaiyan Temple, Amritsar, despite curfew, left 20 dead and over 40 injured. Similar crude bombs exploded at Kurukshetra on June 19 leaving 20 dead, Tilak Nagar Vegetable market in West Delhi, the following day (8 dead and 42 injured), and again in the bustling Katra Ahluwalia at Amritsar the next day leaving 28 dead and 50 injured.[19]

The killing of General Labh Singh, the undisputed head of the KCF on July 12,1988, disrupted this cooperation. Avtar Singh Brahma and some others were soon felled. These were results of some militants captured during the Operation Black Thunder being used to identify them while sitting in vehicles with tinted glasses. Their position was soon filled by upcoming men who went on a number of killing sprees. The only difference was that against an average of 200 killings before the Operation Black Thunder, the number fell to about 150 a month. That may have been because of elimination of state-terroristic groups. It was contended that militancy had rather spread because of multiplicity of squads coming up under little known leaders.[20]

The image of K.P.S. Gill as also of the police and administration got a severe battering because of the publicity given to the amorous advances he made to a senior lady Indian

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Administrative Services Officer, at an evening party. She lodged a First Information Report against him. The government chose to ignore this serious lapse because, in its eyes, Gill was doing good work, in making short shrift of the Sikh youth as ordinary criminals. In the process, it made a mockery of the Government Servants Conduct Rules. The papers like *Times of India* (editorial, August 3) and journalists like Khushwant Singh chose to come out strongly in favour of Gill who rededicated himself to the 'good work' he was doing. These only affected Gill's getting Padam Shri in place of Padam Bhushan on the eve of the following Republic Day celebrations.

Ribeiro was explicit, "The police can only fight terrorism: not solve it."[21] He looked towards political solution for that.

In another half-hearted attempt, Prof. Darshan Singh Ragi was brought back as Head Priest of Akal Takht on August 13. Rode meanwhile had been disowned by Damdami Taksal. According to Harinder Baweja, of the *Sunday Observer*, Manochahal who had support of some central leaders and "has received substantial money from the government" backed Ragi.[22] Vipul Mudgal of *India Today* attributed Ragi's return to Buta Singh,[23] who probably dangled him to Rajiv as a substitute for Rode. The easing out of Mann shortly afterwards as President of the UAD is to be seen as part of such monoeuvrings.

Punjab continued to be victim of lack of a clear cut policy. Rajiv's visit to the state in September 1988 evoked indifference and scepticism of the people. His announcement to release another 138 of the innocent persons from detention heldsince Operation Bluestar did not evoke even "a murmur of approval". For, people asked, if they were innocent, why were they not released earlier? His two other ingredients of holding panchayat elections and holding an all party meet to thrash the Punjab problem had nothing new or startling about them. The people rather felt scared at his sight.

The killing of the Sikhs in Bidar in Karnataka on September 14-15, was reminiscent of November 1984 riots in Delhi and other places. It further exasperated the feelings. Most of the students affected were from Punjab and Delhi.

By the end of September, followed a natural disaster, marked by heavy rains in the catchment area of Bhakra between September 25-28, 1988. The sudden release of water from Bhakra dam caused 10 feet high cascades of water which washed away villages within hours. 9000 of Punjab's 12,989 villages were flooded, 2500 were completely marooned or simply washed away. The deluge affected 34 lakh (3.4 mn) people. And, Chairman Bhakra Beas Management Board, Maj Gen B.N. Kumar, did not even warn the people over the fast telecommunications network - TV and Radio - much less save the situation by releasing large quantities of water over an extended span of time. And to rub salt over fresh wounds, Union Agriculture Minister Bhajan Lal termed the floods as blessings in disguise.[24] He mentioned of rise in ground water level. What really he meant was discovery of Bhakra weapon to deluge the entire rural Punjab. The moral was not lost on the militants who, in what they regarded just retribution, gunned down Maj. Gen. B.N. Kumar. They also adopted classic guerrilla tactics in killing 175 persons in a fortnight.[25]

The second half of 1988 was marked by tension over the likely hanging of Satwant Singh and Kehar Singh whose death sentence were upheld by the Supreme Court on August 3,1988. Balbir Singh the third accused sentenced to capital punishment was acquitted.

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Before proceeding further we may recapitulate the various stages of the trial.

As stated earlier, the investigations into the assassination of Indira was completed by November 18, 1984. Only Beant Singh and Satwant Singh were involved. The Special Investigation Team (SIT) headed by S. Anantram constituted shortly afterwards thought it demeaning for a Prime Minister to be felled only by two of her security guards! A conspiracy was a must. And, it worked out one initially involving Kehar Singh, (an assistant in Directorate General of Supplies and Disposals), who was distantly related to Beant Singh, and Balbir Singh a Sub-Inspector in Prime Minister's security.

The trial had political overtones as Indira came from the ruling dynasty. Also the accused came from the Sikh community whose credibility was suspect. The question before the judges was not only about the guilt or otherwise of the various accused but also that of their own credibility and of their patriotism. It had emotional overtones.

Satwant Singh was only a hitman, not the key figure. The best course in his case would have been to adopt the same posture as adopted by Nathuram Godse in M.K. Gandhi murder case. But he was not a learned man. Neither was his father, Tarlok Singh, who throughout the trial retained his rustic common sense. His was a most tormented soul. On the one hand, he was accepting *saropaos*, robes of honour, as father of a living-martyr, and on the other Satwant's lawyer was playing jugglery with the case in the light of his own idiosyncrasies. Tarlok Singh and Satwant Singh would have loved the lawyer to adopt Godse's stance, but were left gaffing.

The case against Kehar Singh and Balbir Singh rested only on circumstantial evidence, and "a coincidence" which Mahesh Chandra, Additional Sessions Judge, conceded "cannot be termed as a conspiracy." To begin with, Mahesh Chandra was told that investigations in the case were complete by November 18, and what the SIT did thereafter was nothing but bullshit. But the stakes were high. His eyes were riveted to a high Court judgeship which awaited him in case he announced a judgment asked for the by the SIT. Despite gasping holes in the evidence - non production of vital witnesses and medical reports on Indira as also Sub-Inspector Rameshwar Dayal who received three difference-type of bullets in his thighs, Mahesh Chandra proceeded to weave all the three accused, Satwant Singh, Kehar Singh and Balbir Singh, in a conspiracy and sentenced them to death on January 22, 1986. He was so overwhelmed by his over enthusiasm that he forgot to mention the mode of execution and that it was subject to confirmation by the High Court.

The Judges of the High Court, seized of irresistible compulsions asked piercing and searching questions about the fabricated evidence about Balbir Singh's detention on November 1, and his re-arrest on December 3, 1984, and contradictions in the police records. In the end, they chose to ignore all that, and on December 3, 1986, confirmed whole hog Mahesh Chandra's judgment. The presiding judge, S. Ranganathan was kicked high to the Supreme Court.

It was extraordinary, firstly, that the conspiracy trial by Additional Sessions Judge and enquiry into Indira's assassination by Justice M.P. Thakkar, a sitting judge of the Supreme Court, went hand in hand. And then, Thakkar's two reports throwing valuable light were suppressed. These were not shown even to the President, Giani Zail Singh, much less to the Judges of either the High or the Supreme Court. The government was not interested in finding out the truth; presently it was only in conviction of Satwant Singh, Kehar Singh and Balbir Singh. And, Thakkar report when presented to Parliament in March 1989 showed that Kehar Singh and Balbir Singh had

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nothing to do with any conspiracy whatsover to murder Indira. Verily, the motto on the national emblem, *satyamevajayate* meant whatever is victorious is truth or truth lies in victory.

Also, the SIT fabricated another conspiracy case involving Simranjit Singh Mann and a host of other Sikhs. Rajiv, Buta and Chidambaram were closely involved. The SIT wanted the Special Public Prosecutor, K.L. Arora to give an instant advice. He instead) recorded a small note that the case was not worth the paper written) on. It had no substance in it. Nonplussed, the SIT only conveyed) that, then, Arora would not argue the government case in the Supreme Court. That marked the beginning of the rise of G. Ramaswamy in the echeleons of Government of India, as he was willing to oblige the SIT with the sort of endorsement they wanted. In due course, he rose to be Attorney General of India.

The case landed in the Supreme Court and ordinarily its turn would not have come for a couple of years more. But Rajiv publicly said that his mother had been killed and the accused were yet to be meted out punishment. Supreme Court dutifully gave precedence to the case over others. Since what was at stake was their own patriotism they applied their mind to the evidence, but only partially. It was obvious that the case against Balbir Singh was fabricated one. They acquitted him. Even the Special Public Prosecutor felt that the case against Kehar Singh was much weaker. "If Balbir is acquitted, Kehar's conviction cannot stand," said K.L. Arora. But it did stand. If both of them were acquitted, the SIT conspiracy to involve others in a second conspiracy would have ended straightaway in a fiasco. In the process, the Judges of the Supreme Court showed their jaundiced mind when they discussed the issue of Beant Singh's taking *amrit*, baptism, as if that was subversive. Also, according to the judges, Beant twice within 10 days, October 14 and 24, 1984 took *amrit*. They did not seek to know that that would be sacrilegious for one who takes it and the one who administers it.

Kehar Singh's conviction evoked a lot of sympathy from the media and from eminent personalities. They regarded it as a 'judicial murder'. The foreign press including the *Economist* (London) too wished Rajiv to have been in a favourable state of mind. M.K. Gandhi's son Ramdas Gandhi had written to the Governor General to grant clemency to Nathuram Godse. Indira's son did not. The President twice on advice of the Prime Minister refused his mercy petition. Satwant Singh mercifully had not put in one.

Satwant Singh's last testament: "There is no greater privilege for a Sikh than to lay down his life for the protection of Harimandir and the Akal Takht. I wish to be born again and again, and each time to be able to die for it." These would rank him amongst the leading Sikh martyrs.

Kehar Singh on the other hand till the very last protested his innocence. The Supreme Court went to the extent of saying that, "The finding of guilt recorded by the High Court against Kehar Singh is a mixture of both relevant and irrelevant evidence adduced by the prosecution." Here even Supreme Court failed to sift grain from the chaffe.[26] His case was like that of Master Amir Chand who was hanged in the first Delhi Conspiracy Case on inadequate evidence.[27] His son, Rajinder Singh, rightly said if "she was murdered by some one else. ." probably things would have been different. Two former Judges, Ajit Singh Bains and C.S. Tiwana, Chairman and President respectively of the Punjab Human Rights Organisation stated "There was no justice for Sikhs in India" and that the "government was more barbaric than the racist regime in South Africa."[28]

Satwant Singh and Kehar Singh were hanged to death on January 6, 1989. Prof. Darshan Singh Ragi, Akal Takht Jathedar, termed them *shaheed*, martyrs. The militants in retaliation during January 1989 hanged 10 persons and killed another 109 including security men, in shootouts and bomb blasts. The police in turn killed 42 of them including Harbir Singh alias Veeru Ribeiro and his associates of the KCF. For the first time, it recovered from militants AK-74 assault rifles which were more sophisticated than AK-47 rifles.[29] The militants made good their losses by recruiting new youth. As Vipul Mudgal observed, "the mass base of terrorists had widened, a significant stage in the drift towards insurgency."[30]

Communal violence against the Sikhs in Hindu-dominated urban areas in Punjab was part of the Hindu prerogative. Now, it proliferated to Jammu, winter capital of the state of Jammu and Kashmir. On January 13, 1989, from noon, the 10,000 strong Sikh procession as part of Guru Gobind Singh's birthday celebrations came under a systematic attack of the organised Hindu mob. For "six blood curdling hours", the Sikhs were bludgeoned to death with iron rods, reminiscent of anti-Sikh carnage in Delhi in November 1984. Lynching and arson went hand in hand, with smoke billowing all over the city. In the words of *India Today* correspondents, "The police, according to every witness who has talked simply looked the other way or ducked for shelter." They quoted senior-most officials to state, "Not a lathi was raised, not a teargas shell fired. It almost seemed as if the police were encouraging the show."[31] The days haul, according to official sources, was 13 dead, hundreds injured, 145 vehicles and hundreds of shops burnt. According to unofficial sources, the number of dead was several times over. The worst was that the Chief Minister was in the town.

All the 200 Hindus arrested days afterwards were released "following a week long hartal organised by the BJP". The Union Government sent no word of sympathy or concern to the victims. Rather, the right of Hindus to kill the Sikhs at will was implicitly conceded; "and" as *India Today* correspondents observed, "the guilty go scot free."[32]

Back home to Punjab. The brutalisation of the police and "state terrorism" forced 40 Sarpanchas of Batala area to resign after lodging complaints ranging from "illegal and unregistered arrests to gross misbehaviour by policemen." The villagers at the meeting called by Governor Siddhartha Shankar Ray at Village Shankarpur near Batala spoke of police brutalities, especially of SSP Gobind Ram who, a la Izhar Alam in Amritsar earlier, was now maintaining an underground terrorist force comprising of criminals and smugglers. K.P.S. Gill put his foot down and threatened to quit, if Gobind Ram was transferred.[33]

Illegal detention and elimination of the Sikh youth, thanks to Gill's implementing the union Home Ministry's policy of untempered state terrorism, were the order of the day all over Punjab, especially since the middle of 1988. The usual practice was for police -consisting of local central investigation/intelligence agency (CIA) toughs, men from police and CRPF - to raid the Sikh homes at night and take away youth between 15 to 35 years of age, or better still, to catch them in the streets. The families were told that either they had not taken into custody the young man at all, or he had escaped a few hours later. Tied hand and foot, with weight tied around their waists, the bodies were pushed into the canals or river beds to appear years later, with tell tale marks, but without anyone being able to recognise their kith and kin.[34]

Rajiv, by early 1989, was reconciled to state terroristic set ups and police using criminals and smugglers to fight against the militancy. In a major departure, he desisted from attributing all violence to the militants.[35] It was this realisation that led him to announce on March 3, 1989, the

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release of all Jodhpur detenues, withdrawal of Punjab Disturbed Areas Act, and Armed Forces (Punjab and Chandigarh) Special Powers Act (except for Amritsar, Gurdaspur and Ferozepur districts), removal of all restrictions on entry of foreigners in Punjab, and withdrawal of special powers under NSA. Some people attributed these measures to U.S. Congressman Stephen Solarz's recent visit to Punjab, and a motion in the U.S. Congress to deny India the 'most favoured nation' status in matters of trade, because of Amnesty International's report on the human rights violations in Punjab.[36]

That, the government was not sincere and its mind was closed was clear before long. Firstly, it was silent on the fate of 309 army men who had been court martialled. Secondly, of 188 Jodhpur detenues released on March 6, as many as 84 including Tohra were re-arrested on charges pending against them.[37] The government, as an afterthought, agreed to look into the nature of charges whether those deserved a jail term of more than 4 years already undergone by them. Thirdly, despite being caught on the wrong foot, after being forced by disclosures in the *Indian Express* to lay copies of the main Thakkar Commission Reports on conspiracy leading to Indira's assassination, Rajiv and Buta Singh proceeded with, on April 7, the government's filing a false and frivolous conspiracy case against Simranjit Singh Mann, Atinderpal Singh, Jagmohan Singh alias Toni, and Prof. Dalip Singh - two Bombay College Lecturers, and Rattan Singh. That reflected the height of government's depravity.

The arrest of two teenage girls, with one of them being molested in Majitha, caused a U.S. Congressman Dan Burton to write to Indian Embassy in Washington about human rights violations in India.[38] The embarrassment caused to the government of India, led to instructions being reiterated in May 1989 to Punjab police not to take women to police stations, or arrest them to produce wanted members of their families.

But Gobind Ram, SSP Batala, was a class apart. He had two women Gurmeet Kaur and Gurdev Kaur lifted on August 21, 1989, from Amritsar and taken to Batala. They were brutally tortured to produce their husbands, now missing for several years. They were at first whipped. Then they were made to lie down with four men on a wooden plank on their thighs. They were incapacitated. That produced a public outcry. Prof. Darshan Singh Ragi, Akal Takht Jathedar spearheaded the campaign against beating of women in police stations and 'repression on Sikhs'. With hundreds of others including religious and political leaders, he gheraoed Batala police station on September 1, 1989. He likened Gobind Ram to 'Ravan, Duryodhan and Dushashan'. President of Human Rights Organisation, Justice Ajit Singh Bains, warned that the Sikhs too were preparing lists of policemen on the basis of their behaviour with the public. There was demand for Gobind Ram's suspension and inquiry by a High Court Judge.[39] Prof Ragi threatened *dharna* at Governor's residence on September 8, unless the demands were conceded.

Ray conceded that Gobind Ram was one of "three-four others who had become sadists due to the extraordinary situation" but still defended him. KPS Gill was still "favourably disposed towards Gobind Ram." As against the duo, whose approach to the Sikh problem was no different than that of Mir Mannu in 18th century Ribeiro was horrified. "I am against brutalisation of the police force" and that "it was a mistake to have sent Gobind Ram to Batala in the first place", said he.[40] However, he was asked to keep his hands off the police department. He was on his way out to a diplomatic assignment, after leaving a bitter legacy.

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Gobind Ram after an enquiry got away with only a transfer from Batala. The retribution came in another form. On September 13, his 18 years old college going son at Jalandhar was shot dead. No one claimed responsibility.

Prof Ragi's appeal to the militants to be humane to women and children had an immediate effect. The militants kidnapped a teenage son of a police officer and four year old son of another in next few days, and treated them well. KPS Gill knelt down to swap men held in illegal police custody, to have the boys released.[41]

Side by side, on September 20, 1989, itself when Gill was striking deal with the militants, Bhai Manjit Singh, younger son of Sant Kartar Singh Khalsa Bhindranwale was being initiated into panthic politics in Gurdwara Ramsar, Amritsar. The meet by the AISSF was especially cleared by Ray and Gill. While the resolutions by the AISSF reiterated the concept of Khalistan, Manjit Singh understandably made no mention of it as the goal.[42] Harminder Singh Sandhu still in detention issued a hard hitting statement which came as a surprise as he had, after Bluestar, offered cooperation to the government.

After the initiation ceremony was over, discernible observers perceived that the government had a finger in every pie, and it "continues to play games in Punjab."[43] Not only that, Haryana Home Minister Sampat Singh in July 1989 had threatened to disclose Buta Singh's links with terrorists, but was prevailed upon to desist from that.[44]

The day of reckoning came. And, the government of Rajiv Gandhi which had made Punjab a big field for its games was defeated. The Congress(I) emerged as the single largest party in the general elections held in November 1989. In Punjab, Simranjit Singh Mann-led Akali Dal won six of thirteen seats, with another four going to candidates backed by it. The people of Punjab had shown an uncanny commonsense.

The last action of Rajiv before demitting office was to withdraw the fictitious conspiracy case against Mann who had won a landslide victory from Tarn Taran constituency, and order his release. Mann, subjected to repression and torture in Jail for five years on trumped up charges, later talked about 'Nuremberg' type trials of 'guilty' police officers. The arch-conspirator, S. Anantram, got scot free. To complicate matters, Rajiv government also released Harminder Singh Sandhu, General Secretary, of the AISSF. Only a shortwhile earlier, he had issued a terse statement for Khalistan and thanked Pakistan for offering sanctuaries to the militants. Immediately after his release, he reiterated that Khalistan was the goal of the AISSF and that they would talk to the new government of V.P. Singh "only through the aegis of the United Nations."[45] Ray mischievously sought instructions from Prime Minister V.P. Singh, when he had hardly taken over, whether or not to re-arrest Sandhu. His intentions were not clean. This was clear from the fact that a couple of days earlier he had hastily closed the case against Gobind Ram, former SSP Batala, charged with beating up Sarpanchas publicly, and his recommendations to hold Assembly elections.[46] He was out to embarrass the new government and also create complications for Mann.

V.P. Singh's response came immediately after he took over as Prime Minister on December 6, 1989. He decided to visit the Golden Temple, Amritsar, the following day. Accompanied by Deputy Prime Minister Devi Lal, Home Minister Mufti Mohammed Sayeed and Inder Kumar Gujral not in his capacity as Foreign Minister but as Minister from Punjab, he moved through the *parikarma* of the Golden Temple without armed security guards and prayed at the key Sikh and Hindu shrines

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in Amritsar. He drove through Amritsar in an open jeep. Even elements from the AISSF hailed the gesture.

The same day Siddhartha Shankar Ray after having a feel of the changed atmosphere resigned. He was replaced on December 8 by former Cabinet Secretary Nirmal Kumar Mukherjee, who vouchsafed new approach to solve the Punjab problem.

Akali Dal (Mann) lost no time in redefining its goals within the framework of a united India. In a resolution adopted on December 10, 1989, it demanded an "autonomous Sikh region" in north India comprising Punjab, and some adjoining areas of Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan with the right to frame its own "internal constitution" having all powers except foreign relations, defence, currency and general communications." The party spokesman, while releasing the resolution, stated that it was based on the Cabinet Mission Plan on the basis of which power was transferred to the two dominions of India and Pakistan in August 1947. This was interpreted by discernible observers as "a significant climbdown from the AISSF stand for an independent Khalistan".[47]

The all-party meeting convened by the Union Home Minister, Mufti Mohammed Sayeed at Delhi on December 17, 1989, adopted a consensus paper on Punjab. It had three main ingredients. One, resolution of Punjab problem within the framework of the constitution without sacrificing the unity and integrity of the country; Two, expeditious steps to secure conviction of the guilty persons involved in 1984 violence against the Sikhs; and Three, repeal of the 59th amendment of the constitution. The Congress(I) was not part of the consensus. Its representatives, P.V. Narasimha Rao, Buta Singh, P. Chidambaram, Darbara Singh and Beant Singh could not point to the specific points to which they did not agree. Later, Congress(I) leaders, to sidetrack the issues under discussion, asked the government to declare its position with regard to revival of pro-Khalistan declarations, continuation of killings and re-entry of arms into the Gurdwaras. About these, the document did make specific references. These were reflective of Congress(I)'s line of action to aggravate the situation in Punjab. The continuous clout of K.P.S. Gill in the state stood it in good stead. Then there was the CRPF.

Mann welcomed evolving the national consensus and extended his support to V.P. Singh who, on December 19, 1989, reiterated the need for "healing hearts". Three Akali Dal (Mann) M.P.s, who took their oath in Lok Sabha two days later, voted for the motion reposing confidence in V.P. Singh government. Two of them, Rajinder Kaur Bulara and Rajdev Singh, who spoke, made impassioned plea for restoration of democratic processes in Punjab and squarely condemned Congress(I) for perpetrating inhuman atrocities on the Sikhs. It was Congress(I) which fostered on them the desire to secede in order to live honourably.

By the end of December 1989 there was slight change in the attitude of the new government. Firstly, the quantum of autonomy being asked for by Akali Dal (Mann) was beyond comprehension of any Hindu dominated political party. Secondly, if elections were held to the provincial assembly as scheduled, Akali Dal (Mann) which had won plurality of votes in 74 out of 99 segments of provincial assembly constituencies during November Parliamentary elections, was bound to sweep the polls, marginalising further Badal and Barnala Akali Dais. This was not acceptable to various political elements including not only Congress(I) but also BJP, CPM and even Deputy Prime Minister, Devi Lal. Thirdly, only Ray had been replaced. His alter-ego Gill, who continued to play havoc with the administration, was still there. The police's putting to death Akali

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Dal (Mann) M.P. Baldev Singh Khudian on December 28, 1989, and dumping his body in a canal (this came to light in early January 1990) was designed to foul the atmosphere.

Governor Nirmal Mukherjee's statement that the issue of holding provincial elections shall be reviewed by the end of January 1990 was seized upon by Hindu-conscience keeper *Times of India* (editorial, December 30, 1989) to advocate that "it would be dangerous to restore full democratic process in Punjab at this stage before the new government becomes fully cognisant of the ground realities in the state."

Harkishan Singh Surjeet of CPM followed with a press conference at Chandigarh on January 2, 1990. He termed Akali Dal (Mann)'s demands as "nothing but a step towards Khalistan." He opined that Congress(I), BJP, CPI and CPM were not in favour of holding assembly elections in Punjab at present.[48] This line up was a signal to V.P. Singh to move cautiously. The same day, Mann at Faridkot conveyed his willingness to attend all-party meet on Punjab being convened by the Centre at Ludhiana on January 11, 1990. He wanted the centre to announce general amnesty and release of all the Sikhs lodged in Jails, reinstatement of army deserters, repeal of all black laws, and stoppage of 'fake encounters'. He pointed out that the Sikhs were being treated 'like slaves' and 'excesses' against them were continuing. Badal and he wanted the administration to trace Khudian, the missing M.P.[49]

The recovery of Khudian's body the following day from the canal at the very site at which, the police had earlier said, Khudian had committed suicide, was one of the factors which prevented Mann from attending the all-Party meet. The refusal of Mukherjee on January 7, to grant general amnesty, and murderous spree by the CRPF at Tarn Taran, for which the governor had to express his regrets, were others. Finally, Mann had his doubts about the utility of an all-Party rally. "When you don't deal with reality and indulge in theatrics it only leads to a mirage", he said. He had the mandate and wanted Damdami Taksal and the AISSF to be called for negotiations. He asked his men to prepare the list of police excesses and categorise the police officers in A.B.C. categories, as police did with the militants. [49a]

A day before the Ludhiana meet, Gobind Ram, former SSP Batala, was blown out in a bomb blast in his Punjab Armed Police (PAP) office at Jalandhar and registered their presence. According to Joyce Pettigrew this was the work of persons from within the (PAP).[50]

Ludhiana meet on January 11, 1990, was a big *tamasha*. V.P. Singh was illustriously cheered and repeatedly got off his car to accept felicitations from the crowd enroute. The non-attendance of Akali Dal(Mann) was a set back: Badal, and Barnala who was heckled throughout, provided no substitute. The absence of Congress(I) was on the cards.

It was practically a meet of the National Front. The various constituents blew their own trumpets and dispersed. V.P. Singh was all for giving the peace a chance in Punjab. His pronouncements, inhibited as he was, consisted only of platitudes. The only tangible announcement was the one ordering judicial probe into Khudian's death. He was prevented from making a major announcement by Atal Behari Vajpayee of the BJP and Harkishan Singh Surjeet of the CPM, both of whom were full of venom.

Vajpayee glibly saw a contradiction in the demand for general amnesty in Punjab to the one asking for punishment of those guilty of committing violence against the Sikhs in November 1984

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riots. He cast aspersions on sincerity of Mann Akali M.P.s. Surjeet smelt a theocratic state in the Sikh aspirations.

Devi Lal was his usual ebullient self. Gujral still talked of "a new chapter of peace and patriotism". Indrajit Gupta of CPI was the lore voice demanding elections. Badal's suggestion to set up a commission under a Supreme Court Judge to identify those responsible for bringing Punjab to its present sorry pass, though a noval one, was unrealistic.[51] No judge of Supreme Court, a packed body, whose members have sold their conscience, would be honest to himself much less to the ruling elite to do so.

Mann met V.P. Singh at Halwara airport on his arrival and again at the lime of his departure. He, inter alia, wanted Prime Minister to dismantle the "repressive administrative machinery" in Punjab. This meant removal of Chief Secretary, S.L. Kapur, and Director General of Police, KPS Gill. This should have been at the top of Prime Minister's agenda right from the day of his visit to Amritsar. Mann asked for recall of para military forces and wanted the administration to provide a list of those wanted by the state for acts of terrorism.[52]

V.P. Singh's seeking assurance from Mann that his party, if it comes to power in the assembly, would not adopt a resolution asking for Khalistan," only showed the height of distrust of the Sikhs. It also revealed the depth to which suspicions had taken root among the people who considered the Sikh's asserting their independence a logical step after undergoing that much deprivation and persecution. No amount of assurances can generate faith in a society based on chicanery and skullduggery. Mann assured V.P. Singh as much as he could that his apprehensions were baseless. He even offered to forge an alliance with the ruling Janta Dal to rule out such a possibility.[54]

To clarify his position, Mann in an interview with the *Washington Post* disclosed that he had sought mediation of former U.S. President Jimmy Carter over Punjab's "political status to end the civil strife in the Indian stale". Carter was already seized of similar problems in central America and an Ethiopian province. Mann had in view the "autonomous powers granted to the French speaking province of Quebec in Canada" as a model, for a possible solution of Punjab problem. "But that was red herring to Congress(I)-BJP-CPM combine. Mann should have been more circumspect, especially because V.P. Singh was heading a minority government.

Amidst the welter of contradictory pulls, it was obvious that V.P. Singh's drive towards peace in Punjab had met a setback, if not come to a grinding halt. Only a unilateral action on the part of Prime Minister could salvage the situation and take Punjab out of the morass. For that, V.P. Singh needed courage and full support from within his own party. That was not forthcoming.

To begin with, taking away, in part, Punjab problem from Inder Kumar Gujral and entrusting it to Arun Nehru, the evil genius behind November 1984 riots and grounding of the Rajiv-Longowal accord, was a retrogressive step. It meant putting a new heart to the oppressive administrative set up in Punjab. Significantly, Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs, on Nirmal Mukherjee's report on January 19, sought to dispel the impression that "terrorists can run amuck in Punjab just because of the recent mandate of the People."[56] The security forces resumed their offensive with venom to wipe out the militants. The killing of Harmindar Singh Sandhu, considered close to the administration, on January 24, 1990, was a retributory step.

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Side by side, the administration sought to erode the image of Mann. Akal Dal (Mann) was already facing teething troubles because it was not yet a single, cohesive political entity with a clear cut policy and programme of action. The revolt of Dhian Singh Mand M.P. to assert his identity, and moves to further splinter the A1SSF are to be seen in that light.

And then, the security forces using a constable to plant and explode a powerful bomb at the Police Training College, Phillaur, on February 11, 1990, to show the bold face of 'terrorism' was a class in itself.[57] There was increase in killings and extortions. The police set up in Punjab was determined not to let the centre free itself from the kind of unimaginative, police-oriented, approach that it had inherited from the previous regime. Congress(I), BJP, CPM, as also the ruling Janta Dal in another few days, openly advocated that elections should not be held in Punjab until some kind of normalcy was restored. The government too, by now, was prevaricating. By the third week of February, it was thinking in terms of extension of President's rule beyond May 11.[58] It was also toying with the idea of reviving the Punjab assembly dissolved earlier, to bring up Badal vis-a-vis Mann. Barnala could be accommodated with a governorship. Mann was quite upset at the various moves. He could have said with Julius Ceasar, "The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves, that we are underlings." On March 7, he termed the union government as a "bunch of criminals from top to bottom" and the Punjab police "an organised gang of terrorists". Pie expressed himself against killing of innocent persons, extortions and robberies, etc. But the "organised gang of terrorists" struck in a big way the same evening killing 28 persons and injuring another 30 in Hindu dominated Abohar in a bomb blast. Conveniently, electricity and telephone lines were down. And then, they struck again at Tarn Taran, the following day.

Mann knew the police game. He called on V.P. Singh and Devi Lal, separately on March 8, and emphasised the need for removal of Director General Police and Chief Secretary as a process of dismantling of the oppressive machinery. Prime Minister seemed agreeable.

An all-party meeting held at Raj Bhavan on March 13, by and large, opposed the holding of Assembly elections in the state in the prevalent circumstances. Surjeet and Vajpayee made firm declarations to the fact on March 23, at Khatkar Kalan celebrations marking Shaheed Bhagat Singh's martyrdom anniversary.

The 64th Constitution Amendment Bill to extend President's rule in Punjab beyond May 10 introduced in Lok Sabha on March 30, fell through at the introduction stage as Congress(I) chose to withdraw from the House. A majority of total members of the House was not present. A meeting of leaders of various parties including Congress(I), decided that it should be reintroduced on April 4. The Government now sought to manage a convenient terroristic act on the eve of introduction of the Bill to ensure its safe passage. A powerful bomb blast went off at Batala on April 3, killing 40 people. The irate Hindu mob caught hold of 12 Sikhs near the Gurdwara and killed them in presence of the police and the BSF personnel. The post mortem report indicated that two of them had been killed in police firing - a glaring truth despite KPS Gill's denial to the contrary.[59]

The bomb blast caused communal flare up. Indefinite curfew was imposed at Batala. The government agreed to Congress(I)'s moving an adjournment motion in Lok Sabha on April 5, to extract its support in passage of the bill. It was also receptive to the plea for Mukherjee's removal. Mann was explicit, "In case the Sikhs are denied their constitutional rights, we will be forced to redefine our political goals."[60] He also held the Punjab government squarely responsible for the killings at Batala.

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On Baisakhi, April 13, 1990, at Talwandi Sabo, Mann announced his resolve to approach the U.N. for a plebiscite in Punjab to find out whether the Sikhs wanted to live in India. He also stated that the people of Punjab would not support the government in case of a war with Pakistan. Some prominent members formed a "committee on Punjab" with Justice (Retd) V.M. Tarkunde as its president to "devise ways and means to bring about a political resolution to the Punjab problem."[61]

Mann and V.P. Singh had, of late, drifted apart. Already Mann had not taken his oath as a member of Lok Sabha on one pretext or the other. Earlier it was release of Attinder Pal Singh, a party M.P. Later, it was Mann's insistence to take his three feet long sword alongwith him to the House. The issue of taking of the sword was used just to express his disgust at the government's handling of Punjab situation.

The observance of *ghallughara* (holocaust) week in early June 1990 saw mammoth crowds attending functions sponsored by the militant groups. Mann's *ros* (protest) march for restoration of democratic processes, covering several villages in the borders of Amritsar and Gurdaspur, besides his listening to the people's grievances and attending *bhog* ceremonies of militants killed, were provocative to the administration. The centre already politically adrift, replaced Nirmal Kumar Mukherjee who had been inquisitive about the security forces mis-doings, by a faceless Janta Dal Member of Rajya Sabha, Virendra Verma. He proved to be an uninspiring and inapt Governor, Gill administered him a sharp rebuke on June 23, 1990, when in a closed door meeting, he stated that "brutalities had increased and that the police had a hand in kidnapping and extortions."[62] It was now obvious that Gill had emerged as the real power.

The government inducted National Security Guards in the border districts in July to supplement the police and para military forces. It had its immediate impact in 200 civilians and 'more than 150 suspected terrorists' being killed during July 1990. The police now started showing civilians and militants being killed in what it called 'inter-gang rivalries'. "The fall out" in the words of Kanwar Sandhu of *India Today* "is that the police have once again assumed the preponderant role in the administration."[63]

The militants made their presence felt at Chandigarh when they killed former Finance Minister Balwant Singh and then "two senior engineers posted on controversial SYL canal project," which brought the work at the project to a creeching halt.[64] They also had the Chandigarh-based newspapers to publish in full, Sukha and Jinda's letter to the President. This was the handiwork of the new Panthic Committee headed by Dr. Sohan Singh retired Director, Health Services of Punjab. It declared itself against the pursuit of parliamentary path to gain power.

In another month, the government took "the controversial decision to ask the army to mount exercises in these areas." This was later termed operation Rakshak 1. A series of new steps including night ambushes were chalked out.[65]

V.P. Singh was disturbed at the turn of events. His visit to Lopoke village, on India-Pakistan borders, was a non-event and his prescription of "all-party meeting" was termed by Badal as an "exercise in futility". V.P. Singh full of remorse stated, "One thing I will regret all my life for which I will not pardon myself, and publicly acknowledge my mistake, in not holding elections (in Punjab) within six months of the Government coming into power."[66]

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By the autumn of 1990, V.P. Singh government had run out of ideas. That was true in regard to the general problems facing the country, especially the continued self-immolation by caste-Hindu youth protesting against acceptance of Mandal Commission Report. BJP's efforts to ride on the crest of Hindu revivalism brought it and the ruling Janta Dal to the parting of ways.

Mann's decision to quit Lok Sabha seat on October 12, 1990, was a pointer to the hardening of attitudes. Mann in a press statement said, "We have been thrown out of the Constitution. Only the United Nations can restore democracy in Punjab."[67]

The fall of V.P. Singh government shortly afterwards and incoming of the new one, headed by Chandra Shekhar caused much flutter. Chandra Shekhar was one of the few leaders who had condemned Indira's Operation Bluestar. But now he was in power with the support of Rajiv Gandhi's Congress(I) which was determined to draw its pound of flesh.

At Chandra Shekhar's first meeting, KPS Gill abused Virendra Verma. He positively disliked the situation. That made him to transfer KPS Gill as Director General of CRPF and replace Virendra Verma by General O.P. Malhotra. To revamp the upper echelons, he replaced the Chief Secretary and brought Tejendra Khanna from the centre.

That tended to give a new but facile look to the administration which was worried at the media's caving in to the code of conduct issued by the Panthic Committee led by Dr. Sohan Singh on November 20. The code wanted the media to use the word militant and not terrorist, and drop the prefix 'self-styled' while mentioning the rank. The Radio and TV stations at Jalandhar and Amritsar followed suit. But not the Radio Station at Chandigarh. It did so only after its Station Director, Rajendra Kumar Talib, was shot dead on December 6, 1990.

Meanwhile, at the ground level, 100,000 to 1 50,000 troops were spreading out in November 1990 on the Punjab borders to carry on Rakshak 1 exercise, to plug the border and extend support to the civil administration even in remote areas. To add to the deception, Chandra Shekhar offered to talk to any one, including militants on all matters inclusive of Khalistan, "to show how impractical it was."[68]

The Akalis fell to the bait. As a first step three Akali Dais - led by Badal. Tota Singh and Mann - decided to unite at Fatehgarh. Sahib on December 26, under the overall leadership of Mann. But a day before Babbar Akali Dal, to rock the boat, came into being.

Mann met Chandra Shekhar on December 28,1990, and presented a memorandum. It emphasised the Sikhs resolve to assert their right of self-determination granted to them by international law and article 51 of the Constitution. It went on that the "Sikhs have no choice but to safeguard their religious, political and other interests", recalled that the Sikhs had joined the Union on the basis of the Cabinet Mission Plan which gave the right of provinces to change their constitution after 10 years. "Even if the format of the province has changed, the principle remains". The memorandum emitted an aura of a suppressed nation, rising against the tyranny of "Brahminical Government of India".[69]

Both CPM and Congress(I) felt disturbed at the tenor of the talks. Rajiv Gandhi expressed his strong reservations at the invocation of article 51 of the Constitution. Mann challenged L.K. Advani, Rajiv Gandhi and E.M.S. Namboodiripad to have a debate with him on the issue.[70]

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Independent of that, a meeting between Chandra Shekhar and representatives of the AISSF(Manjit), Damdami Taksal, and Panthic Committees led by Manochahal and Zaffarwal was held on January 11, 1991, at the Prime Minister's farm house at Bhondsi in Haryana. Chandra Shekhar said that because of the minority character of his government, he was not able to discuss with them an autonomous region within India much less an independent Sikh state. He could attend to cases of innocent detainees, barricades before the Golden Temple, etc. As a result, cases against Bhai Manjit Singh held in Sangrur Jail were dropped and he was released on January 14, 1991.[71]

The link for these talks was provided by Gurtej Singh formerly of IAS who had connections with P.S. Kohli IAS, a former adviser to Punjab Governor. One Guruswamy of Andhra Pradesh who had his own connections with Gurtej Singh of Andhra cadre acted as a common friend to carry through the talks.[72] A political conference in February presided over by Tohra gave mandate to the militants for talks with the government. These were obviously a trap.

Before proceeding further, it would be of interest to have a look at the various Panthic Committees and their alignments. Shekhar Gupta in *India Today* and Samir Lal in a special report in the *Times of India* of February 10, 1991 details them as follows:

1. *Panthic Committee* (*Dr. Sohan Singh*)
1. 1 Khalistan Commando Force led by Paramjit Singh Panjawar
1. 2 Babbar Khalsa International led by Sukhdev Singh Babbar
1. 3 Khalistan Liberation Force led by Gurjant Singh Budhsinghwala
1. 4 Bhindranwale Tiger Force of Khalistan led by Rachhpal Singh Sangha and Satnam Singh Satta.
1. 5 AISSF - Daljit Singh Bittu
2. *Panthic Committee* (*Wassan Singh Zaffarwal Group*)
2. 1 Khalistan Commando Force (Zaffarwal group)
3. *Panthic Committee* (*Gurbachan Singh Manochahal group*) -Believed by other militants to be government agents.[73]
3. 1 Bhindranwale Tiger Force of Khalistan (Manochahal group)
3. 2 Khalistan Commando Force (Gurjant Singh Rajasthani group)
3. 3 AISSF (Manjit Singh group) it was a middle ground group confining itself to political and ideological work.[74]
4. *Panthic Committee* (*Gurdev Singh Usmanwala group*)

Note by Samir Lal: None of these organisations has any formal links with various Akali factions or the SGPC. However all the mainstream bodies are susceptible to pressure from the militants.

Unaware of the goings on, Mann awoke to the threat posed by the army's massive involvement in Punjab. The three separate strands - the various steps to the merger of Akali Dais, Mann's talks with the government and army's increasingly spreading its operations went hand in hand for another six weeks when certain militant organisations sought to inject a sense of realism in the ongoing process.

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In a statement issued on February 14, 1991, Bhai Kulwant Singh Babbar on behalf of five militant organisations aligned to Panthic Committee (Dr. Sohan Singh) stated, "The militants have no doubt that Mr. Shekhar is flying on borrowed wings and thus could hardly be worth talking to. A leader on borrowed life could hardly give anything to the Sikhs."[75] He cast doubts on the government's credibility to give them safe passage for talks.

That put a sense of realism in Mann who by end of February wanted the government to withdraw the army and recall the Governor for "having the whole townships searched, and insulted lawyers and intellectuals, gagged the press and robbed every Sikh of his self respect." He characterised Chandra Shekhar government a dummy resting on the shoulders of Rajiv Gandhi, and added "Recently, killing of the Sikhs by the security forces in false encounters reached the proportion of a genocide."[76]

The police excesses boomeranged and found expression in a series of gheraos of police stations and highway blockades following reports of false encounters. The killing of half a dozen farmers at Nathu Ka Burj in Amritsar district in army ambush in February 1991 helped to inflame people's resentment. Governor Malhotra's arrival there later only gave credence to the authorities insensitiveness to the villagers.[77]

The decennial census operations completed by the time indicated, the extent to which the Sikh genocidal policy initiated by Indira had had its impact during the decade 1981-1991.

Keeping in view the strength of the armed forces, the CRPF and the BSF in Punjab at the time of census operations and the strength of Purbea labour in various districts, and reading in between the lines the provisional population figures issued by the census authorities, one comes to the startling conclusion that in Punjab,

a) the Sikhs have lost anything between ten to twelve lakh (1 to 1.2 mn) people mainly youth, during the decade 1981-91: the break up being over 200,000 thousand each in Amritsar and Gurdaspur districts: over 100, 000 each in Ludhiana, Patiala; and Bhatinda districts; between 50,000 to 100,000 in Faridkot, Hoshiarpur, Kapurthala, Jalandhar, Ferozepur and Sangrur districts; between 25,000 to 50,000 in Rupnagar district.
b) the number of the Sikh women in age group 15-35 in 1991 was higher than the corresponding figure for the Sikh menfolk in the same age group.

And, in case the Sikhs continued to observe the current family planning norms, the killing of their youth during 1981-91 which is still going on would show phenomenal downfall in the Sikh population in the next decennial census in 2001.

The formal results of the census operations were yet months away. Mann was still fulminating when it was confirmed that the talks between some sections of militants and Prime Minister had taken place. These were confirmed by Dr. Jagjit Singh Chauhan U.K. based head of Khalistan as also Chandra Shekhar.[78] One could only surmise whether Chauhan, a dubious character, had links with either Zaffarwal or Manochahal Committees, or possibly with both of them. Of all, Panthic Committee (Dr. Sohan Singh) was quite in the dark. It condemned those holding talks with Prime Minister as opportunists.[79]

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The fall of Chandra Shekhar government over the issue of spying by two Haryana policemen at Rajiv's house and India's hurtling towards another general elections stampeded the various Akali factions towards the election fray. Chandra Shekhar played not a mean role in persuading those who had held talks with him in January last to participate in the elections both for Parliament and for Punjab provincial assembly.

Piqued at Congress(I)'s withdrawal of support, Chandra Shekhar, to begin with, was for holding simultaneous elections to Parliament and Provincial assembly seats in Punjab in May 1991 alongwith elections in other parts of India. For that, he over-ruled President R. Venkataraman who had certain reservations mainly because of boycott of Punjab elections by Congress(I).

Chandra Shekhar was partially moved by army's strong recommendations to hold elections in Punjab at an early date. These in the eyes of the union Home Ministry had political overtones. The Army, not conversant with police links with certain militants and state-terrorist outfits, also talked of militant infiltration of security forces it projected a scenario of militancy taking the shape of urban insurgency. The Punjab Police, knowing its role, described it as 'highly exaggerated'.[80] In short, while the army was interested in thinning down its presence, if not complete withdrawal, the government was attempting to institutionalise army presence by its continued involvement in electoral process and after.

But hardly was the notification issued that the union Home Ministry changed its stance. Elections in Assam and Punjab both for Parliamentary seats and for provincial assembly were delinked. Ultimately these were fixed for June 7 and 21 respectively, i.e., almost four weeks in case of Punjab after the completion of process in other parts of India. The point of mischief was that it would enable the new government to play havoc with them. In that, Chandra Shekhar behaved like a crafty Purbea. It also showed his malefic intentions towards the ongoing political process in Punjab. He was acting more as a Congress(I) stooge notwithstanding his earlier good intentions.

The first round of polling to seats in Parliament took place on May 19, 1991. Rajiv was killed by a human bomb, Dhanu (the blessed one - real name Kalaivathi) of LTTE the following day. That led to postponement of the next two rounds of polling to mid June. By the time, the elections in Assam were completed, but not in Punjab.

The election fray only helped to show how fractured the Sikh polity was amidst Akalis, neo-Akalis, militants and pseudo-militants. The alignments were rather sharp.

Firstly, Simranjit Singh Mann, whose Akali Dal had won a mandate during the last general elections to Lok Sabha in 1989. His greatest handicap was that he could not have had the time to weld his party into a political machine. Having been catapulted into political fray after five years incarceration, he faced a great deal of limitations in finding sincere people committed to the cause. And like Sant Fateh Singh in 1960s, he ran the risk of being joined by infiltrators, this time intelligence agents.

Secondly, the alignment of Gurbachan Singh Manochahal, founder member of the first Panthic Committee formed in 1986, Bhai Mohkam Singh of Damdami Taksal and Bhai Manjit Singh of the AISSF. They had greatly felt encouraged after their parleys with Chandra Shekhar since January last. Gurtej Singh formerly IAS was, in the words of Avinash Singh, "believed to be the brain behind the indirect Central support to the federation led by Manjit Singh."[81] They at first

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sought to corner 70 of 117 assembly and 7 of 13 Lok Sabha seats, leaving 40 assembly and 5 Lok Sabha seats to Mann. Bhai Manjit Singh was projected as prospective Chief Minister. Manochahal wanted to get accepted as Jathedar of Akal Takht. And, surprisingly, "Senior police officers have been heard saying in private that there is very little crime against his name in police records."[82] There was, however, revolt in the AISSF and a section from Ferozepur and Kapurthala floated a separate unit.

Thirdly, Badal who broke away from Mann-led Akali Dal. With well knit organisation at his command, he was in full fray despite advice to the contrary of the AISSF (Manjit) activists.[83]

Fourthly, Longowal Akali Dal and a host of others, not of much consequence.

Finally, the militant outfit led by Panthic Committee(Dr. Sohan Singh). They did not now believe in the electoral process. The Committee had been greatly weakend because Dr. Sohan Singh, the think tank of the Committee, was unwell, and according to some sources, had gone out of India for treatment, or was no longer in command.[83a]

Mann faced an uphill task. Firstly, he was at the receiving butt of the rest of the Sikh groups in or outside the election fray. Secondly, he was involved in gruelling arguments with the militants - formerly led by Dr. Sohan Singh whose mantle now fell on Bhai Sukhdev Singh Babbar of Babbar Khalsa International - not to thwart the electoral process by the *bandh* call given by them for June 21-22. He made earnest attempts to convince them by utterances and by insertions in the daily *Ajit* of Jalandhar that they could "achieve their goal by launching a two-pronged struggle" and that there was no contradictions between their struggle by bullet and his by ballot. These were rather complementary. That was especially so as the militants considered Bhai Manjit Singh, in the words of Gobind Thukral of *Hindustan Times*, "as an agent of the Centre."[84]

Mann spoke of the need to revamp the entire administration, stop fake encounters, 'involuntary disappearance' of the Sikh youth, and dismantle the oppressive machinery which was serving as the handmaid of the Centre. The enactment of a special law absolving the police personnel of their oppressive and illegal deeds in case of Akalis coming in to power in Punjab was provocative.

Objectively speaking, one could say that Bhai Sukhdev Singh Babbar on whom fell the mantle of Dr. Sohan Singh Panthic Committee failed to appreciate that extremists and fellow travellers, functioning within the constitutional framework had always played an important role in furthering the cause of revolution. They have throughout history worked within the parameters laid down by the imperialist or authoritarian powers, and availed of the constitutional processes whatsoever available. It had been in the interest of revolutionaries to see that the position of the extremists and cohorts was not compromised, much less overwhelmed, especially by pseudo militants or counter revolutionaries. Sukhdev Singh's distrust of the plank of Mann and Badal to seize power to dismantle the oppressive machinery and cause all round demoralisation, and instead go in for boycott of the elections, showed an utter lack of political processes. He failed to appreciate the distinctions between militants and extremists, or for that matter between militants and terrorists on the one hand, and extremists, moderates and quislings on the other. He also failed to realise that militants cannot overthrow the Indian system, only weaken it. Banda Singh Bahadur did, and could, seize Punjab, but failed against the imperial, read Indian, might. The success of the Sikhs later could be attributed to Nadir Shah and Ahmad Shah Abdali's softening up of the Mughal

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administration. In short, Sukhdev Singh lacked a wider perspective, and failed to come out of the narrow grooves and operate as a leader of broader set up rather than the Babbars.

By the time, electioneering formally came to a close, polling to 11 Assembly and two Lok Sabha seats had been countermanded because of killing of candidates, while election to another set of 11 Assembly and one Lok Sabha seats was fixed for June 22.

By June 19, it was obvious that Congress(I) had improved its position as the largest single party, well short of majority, in the Lok Sabha. It was also obvious, because of political permutations, it was out to form the next government at the Centre. By midnight, Chief Election Commissioner, T.N. Seshan, a nominee of Rajiv to the post and who had conducted the May-June 1991 elections as a circus master, conspired with President R. Venkataraman and postponed the Punjab elections to September 25. Lameduck Prime Minister, Chandra Shekhar, was not even consulted. A disillusioned Governor, Gen. Malhotra, resigned in protest. Akali Dal(Mann) called it a 'fascist' act. The daily *Tribune* (Chandigarh) wrote, "It will be seen as an act of betrayal, one more in a chain of such acts."[85]

In a unique move, Mann candidates wrote to the United Nations Secretary General, Javier Peres de Cuellar "to have the elections conducted in Punjab under the aegis of the U.N. to stop the tide of gross and systematic violations of the human rights." They added, "Punjab has become a colony of the Centre's rule and the Sikhs have been enslaved." Mann also appealed to the militants to stop fratricidal war and change their strategy to avoid serious repercussions.

By mid-August, Akali Dal (Mann) and the AISSF (Manjit) announced 'complete unity' between the two groups. Knowledgeable circles termed it very damaging to Mann.[86]

With Congress(I) back in power at the Centre, it initiated a multipronged policy for suppression of the Sikhs. P.V. Narasimha Rao, the new Prime Minister was an old war horse of Indira vintage. He had long been associated with Indira's Sikh baiting policies. He had willy nilly been a part of Indira's Brahminical zeal.

The appointment of Surindra Nath, a retired I.P.S. officer, the first from that service to get such an appointment, was indicative of the new government's resolve to turn Punjab into a police state. He had earlier been adviser after Operation Bluestar. This caused a setback to Tejendra Khanna's moves to assert supremacy of civil services over the police *raj*. The oppressive state machinery felt greatly encouraged. The security forces in cooperation with the army by July 1991 turned sufficient heat on the militants who, according to some reports, chose to fan out into some convenient places in Haryana, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra.

Soon the union government refused to go by the electoral process. To it, even Bhai Manjit Singh or Manochahal were not acceptable. Surjeet wanted Narasimha Rao to go ahead with the elections, combined with a package deal based on Rajiv-Longowal Accord. He went on to assure Narasimha Rao that Akalis won't participate in the election process, leaving the field free to Congress(I) and others.

It was as a result of such manoeuvrings that Tohra in August 1991 floated the idea of support to the "militant Sikh struggle" by boycotting the elections. Already, he had sought *tankhahiya* Buta Singh's support in elections to Delhi Sikhs Gurdwara Management Committee

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executive posts. The militants, especially aligned to Panthic Committee (Dr. Sohan Singh) erroneously thought that Tohra was adopting their line. Their motivations were different.

The bringing about of 'complete unity' between Akali Dal (Mann) and the AISSF (Manjit) during the period was a step in the same direction - to incapacitate Mann and tame him. Already, he had been considerably weakened by defections. Political experts termed the 'unity' an abject surrender on the part of Mann.[87] His plunging in another two months to extend support to beleaguered Muslim leaders on Ayodhya shrine is to be seen as an effort to regain ground; so were the forays of militants in areas outside Punjab. And, their kidnapping of Romanian diplomat Liviu Radu fell in the same category.

The government at first wanted to intensify its Sikh genocidal policy before choosing to go in for elections. It brought back KPS Gill as Director General of Police in Punjab overcoming Governor Surendra Nath's initial resistance. The union government underscored the continuation of legal anarchy in Punjab. Gill during this period was only a henchman, and a *native* at that. The real power lay with Director General, Intelligence, O.P. Sharma, who got orders directly from the Intelligence Bureau who called the shots. Joyce Pettigrew adds, "in the Punjab law and order issues are controlled by Delhi."[87a]

Gill revamped the police set up by inducting handpicked young I.P.S. Officers, mainly from outside Punjab. He placed them as SSPs (Senior Superintendents of Police) at district level. They began their service career with extra legal powers of life and death, outside the pale of civil power, judiciary or even the constitution. He also drafted as SSPs coldblooded rankers who had excelled themselves in cruelty and heartlessness.[87b] They were assisted by SHOs (Station House Officers) in police stations who had a direct line to Gill who called the shots and/or provided the cover. Police in Punjab now virtually became mercenary.

The policy of summary execution of suspects got buttressed. It had "the blessings of some key officials at the Centre as borne out by series of secret communications from Delhi." Kanwar Sandhu adds that when Sanjeev Gupta, a young SSP inadvertently justified fake encounters, V.S. Vaidya, Special Director (and later, Director of Intelligence Bureau) wrote to Gill on December 30, 1991, "They (district officials;) should refrain from even implicitly hinting that they indulge, connive or approve of anything which is in violation of the law of the land. Their professional compulsions in executive action should not get reflected in their public utterances."[88] Obviously, police excesses 'were to be projected as militant propaganda and in some cases as a result of inter-gang rivalry.

From mid-November 1991 armed forces were inducted in Punjab in a big way. Already the police sponsored gangs were striking terror in the villages especially in Doaba region. They looted the people of their cash, jewellery and other valuables like imported cameras, tape recorders, VCRs and watches.[89] Earlier, it was the government sponsored 'black underwear brigades' which in the words of Sumeet Vir Singh and Sunit Das Gupta stalked the Malwa and terrorised simple village folk.[90] The police all over were virtually running extortion rackets'. Harindar Baweja added that "common also are fake encounters and harassment of those who harbour militants under duress".[91]

Right from the word go, the Operation Rakshak II by the army meant terror for all - the militants who chose to show their firepower in vulnerable areas in Ludhiana, Sangrur and Ropar, or chose to spill over to Haryana and Terai area in U.P., and the simple villagers who lived to tell the tales of horror. The people were not only systematically deprived by the police and security forces

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of their belongings but also of their honour. The CRPF Chief especially sought to justify the large scale rape of women as that, in his views, would change the gene of the forthcoming Sikh generations. The army "actively helped the police pick up youth" and to escape from "disappearances, that occurred subsequently in police or paramilitary custody," let the credit go to the police and para military forces. It tried to apply balm by offering the people medical facilities and supplying them general merchandise and provisions through army's Canteen Stores Department shops. By the time, Punjab was held down by 750 paramilitary companies and several army divisions.

The poignancy of the situation in Punjab was brought to the fore by the report of the two man team of Swiss Workers Assistance Organisation, consisting of Mr. Hanspeter Spaas and Hans-Ueli Raaflaub. They visited parts of Punjab in their private capacity during 1991. According to them, "All government bodies, including the Punjab police, paramilitary units and the armed forces, systematically violate the human rights that are internationally recognised, no less than also the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights." People were arrested illegally, systematically subjected to torture, and those released were rearrested on flimsy grounds. "During house searches, the women, other relatives and children are systematically beaten up, maltreated, sexually abused. and even raped." The civil and judicial authority had been "reduced virtually to a naught and was completely powerless." The report took note of "the growing sense of psychological insecurity among the Sikhs who ran the risk of discrimination in treatment everywhere in the country".[92] Even Khushwant Singh whose position could very well be likened to that of a police spokesman, concedes that while the Sikhs in Punjab got what Bacon called "wild justice", in Haryana they were victims of an insensate "desire to revenge" at the hands of "most of the populace."[93] It was worse, the security personnel disguised themselves as militants, knocked at the people's houses, committed atrocities on them, resorted to extortions for private gains. Then there were depredations by former militants, mentioned as Cats by the people, and some groups like those of Hindus raised as fake Sikhs by Surendar Kumar Billa of Amritsar who operated with the blessings of the security forces, to cause anathema against the militants.[94] They were criminals, pure and simple. But the militants did not escape the flak. Adds Chandan Mitra, "The police undercover operations have added to the confusion over genuine and fake militancy."[95]

When the fear was writ large on the people's faces, the Panthic stalwarts - Parkash Singh Badal, Simranjit Singh Mann, Baba Joginder Singh, Bhai Manjit Singh, Kartar Singh Narang and Sukhbir Singh Khalsa (who was held under TADA but released conveniently to attend the conclave) - met on January 4, 1992, at Chandigarh and unanimously decided to boycott the forthcoming elections. They decided to make formal announcement once the poll notification was issued by the centre. The meeting was said to be upshot of stern directive from the Panthic Committee (Dr. Sohan Singh). As Ramesh Vinayak of *India Today* shortly afterwards observed, "In principle it was the best move: in practice it is fast proving a disaster."[96] And, disaster it was, with Akalis throwing to wind the opportunity to seize power and dismantle the "oppressive machinery" in a prelude to achieve their objectives.

Badal and Mann had been stampeded into the decision against their better judgement. Bhai Manjit Singh said that he would abide by it so long Badal and Mann kept themselves out of the election fray. That was the principal Congress objective and Bhai Manjit Singh seemed to be acting as their agent. Sukhjinder Singh of Badal Akali Dal was the only major Akali leader to see the futility of the decision. He resolved to contest. Many militants and their families put pressure in vain on their leaders to contest the elections.

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Congress(I) felt greatly relieved at the Sikh leadership's falling prey to its machinations and committing harakiri. It spent no sleepless nights at the thought that the elections would be a farce. And, it had earlier enacted a similar one in Assam without losing its equanimity. Presently, annexing 13 Lok Sabha seats from Punjab to make the Congress(I) position comfortable was an overriding objective.

Polling campaign was reduced to two weeks. The notification for elections issued on January 25, fixed the polling for February 19, 1992.

The government left nothing to chance. Encouraged by six Panthic set ups decision to boycott, it charted an elaborate plan to prevent filing of nomination papers by candidates of a host of political parties. Shiromani Akali Dal (Sukhjinder), Bahujan Samaj Party of Kanshi Ram, and Kisan Mazdoor Party came in for special dispensation, while Akali Dal (Kabul), BJP, CPI and even CPM candidates too were not shown any better treatment.

The reports about detention of scores of candidates being prevented from filing their nominations did not bestir the government. Some of the candidates were taken into custody by the police from the rooms of hapless Returning Officers. The Governor and Chief Secretary received over a dozen telegrams on February 2-3 from leaders of various parties protesting against the mischief, to no effect. The state unit of the CPI urged the party to get away from the futile exercise when Congress(I) was going to stage a coup.[97] Shortly afterwards, CPI State Secretary said, "This election is going to be a farce. First, the candidates were stopped by Police from filing their nominations, then detained and later forced to withdraw, and those who are there are prisoners of police."[98]

Sukhjinder Singh whose candidates were prevented enmasse in filing nomination papers was forced to boycott the elections saying that these were "neither going to be free nor independent. ""He asked those who had been successful in filing their papers to withdraw.

The *Hindustan Times* correspondent observed that the complaint about police preventing people from filing nomination papers were "too numerous and specific". But the Chief Election Officer's silence and that of Chief Election Commission were enigmatic.

Bahujan Samaj Party candidates came in for special treatment at the hands of Congress(I) goons, who even resorted to killing some of them. But for violence against them, BSP leaders felt they could have annexed about 45 seats.

In view of the militants plea for boycotting the elections, fear stalked the countryside and polls kindled no hope. The employees whether from within the state or those from the neighbouring states including Delhi stalled to be posted on election duty in Punjab.

It was a terribly low key campaign and villages talked about untold repression at the hands of the security forces who pressurised the people to cast their votes.

Despite all the efforts of the security forces, only 21.6 per cent of the voters chose to exercise their franchise.[100] In majority of 70 rural constituencies, polling ranged from 5 to 10 per cent. In urban areas, opposition including Janta Dal, and leftists - both CPI and CPM-alleged

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massive rigging and manipulation of the results.[101] Congress polled under 10 per cent of votes but secured 87 out of 117 seats in the Assembly, and 12 out of 13 in Parliament. Akali Dal (Kabul) was routed.

The *Times of India* (editorial, February 22, 1992) surmised that the clout of the militants was much more extensive than what the authorities have the world believe. It also spoke of the risk of the communal divide further widening in Punjab. That was also the theme of Harkishan Singh Surjeet who had contributed so much to Congress(I) victory. The union government or Congress(I) were least bothered about the legitimacy of Congress(I) victory, or the feared communal polarisation.

The swearing in of Beant Singh of Congress(I) as Chief Minister of Punjab provided the facade of restoration of the civil government. The 57 months long President's rule, the longest ever in any state, and much beyond the very concept of the framers of the constitution, came to a formal end. Verily, the constitution had failed. The Panthic leaders who by default had brought Beant Singh to power were promptly put behind the bars.

The Chief Minister, or his council of ministers, had no control whatsoever over the police or paramilitary forces which continued to operate under the direct orders of Intelligence Bureau or union Home Ministry.[102] It, was a case of dyarchy.

Beant Singh's collection of figures of those arrested under TADA during the last three years for an answer to a question in Punjab Assembly by Mrs. Vimla Dang, a veteran communist leader, brought the civil administration face to face with the police. He disclosed that there were 9,394 detenues under TADA at the end of 1989. These rose to 10,619 and 14,255 at the end of 1990 and 1991 respectively. The number stood at 13,516 as on February 29, 1992.[103]

These figures were embarrassing as firstly, the government of India had mentioned a figure of 1,218 persons detained in Punjab as on June 15, 1991 to the Amnesty International. Secondly, the actual number of persons detained in Punjab jails did not tally with these figures. Thirdly, these tended to give credence to Amnesty International which had contended that there were between 15,000 to 20,000 persons detained in Punjab jails.[104] Amnesty figures could be nearer the truth as people were held under various other provisions besides TADA.

There was need for Punjab police to demonstrate that induction of Beant Singh government did not impinge on its supremacy. It struck at Ajit Singh Bains, a retired Judge, and Chairman of Punjab Human Rights Organisation, on April 3, 1992. He was arrested, handcuffed, publicly paraded and humiliated in other ways. He was charged under the almighty TADA. The Punjab and Haryana High Court Bar Association struck work. Even Geneva based International Commission of Jurists was perturbed at the gross violation of the rule of law. But his brother judges of Punjab and Haryana High Court, and those of the Supreme Court later, gave him a tardy justice as if the Sikhs were outside the pale of the Constitution.

Such type of bizarre acts shored up international attention. It were as a result of disclosures made by Amnesty International, Asia Watch - an American human rights body which had made an on the spot assessment in Punjab - and other human rights groups, including persistent efforts of Gurmit Singh Aulakh of Washington who had developed good contacts on the Capitol Hill, besides the visiting teams of Members of Parliament from other countries, that Dan Burton, a Republican

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Representative of the U.S. Congress, assisted by Les Aspin, a Democrat and Chairman of the powerful Armed Services Committee, and a score of other members from both sides, introduced a Bill, "Jutice in India Act" in the House Representative in May 1992. It sought termination of the U.S. development assistance to India unless New Delhi repealed repressive laws. Significant mention was made of Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act, National Security Act, Jammu and Kashmir Public Safety Act, Armed Forces (Punjab and Chandigarh) Special Powers Act, and Armed Forces (Jammu and Kashmir) Special Powers Act.[105]

The union Home Ministry nonchalantly continued to lend support to Gill's thesis of treating Punjab problem a mere law and order problem.

The militants on Beant Singh's induction followed a multi-pronged policy. Their objectives were, one, to scare away non-Punjabis as shown by their strike at Sangrur; two, to continue to make their presence felt as at Ludhiana in April which, in the words of Gobind Thukral of *Hindustan Times*, made many Hindus" to say "if the government cannot control the situation, separation is a solution;"[106] three, to make the farmers not to sell wheat to government agencies (which anyhow offered them a pittance in return) whose procurement in spring 1992 was quite unsatisfactory; four, revive Khalsa *Panchayats* on resignation of *Panchas* and *Sarpanchas* which were forthcoming in a big way, despite the presence of army;[107] and five, bend the instruments of state by diktats to civil and political officials. The appeal issued to the militants by engineers and staff of Bhakra mainline seeking "forgiveness for any mistake committed intentionally or unintentionally in the past" signified that it was having its impact.[108] The code of conduct issued by Babbar Khalsa International to local Radio and TV unit to accord Punjabi language the same status as was given to Tamil in Tamilnadu or Bengali in Bengal was met in a major way only after they had regretfully beheaded M.L. Manchanda, Station Engineer of Patiala Radio unit, in May 1992.

Beant Singh's position was only that of a captive, a willing tool, at best a spectator of the drama that was unfolding itself. He was making efforts to bypass the militants and Akalis, and rech directly the hearts of the people. The magisterial enquiry indicting police excesses at Behla village in Tarn Taran police district on June 8-9, 1992, where the Police brutally used civilians in their clash with the militants, was an exercise at fence mending.[109]

So were his emphasis upon his mentors in New Delhi to remove deficient aspects of Rajiv-Longwal Accord and implement the provisions on Chandigarh, borders and river waters more equanimously. His pleas that all post-1966 agreements on river waters be scrapped and the issue looked de novo, or the villages be transferred between Punjab and Haryana on the basis of 1991 census,[110] reflected his desperation to show positive results.

But Beant Singh or his ministers had no answer to the complaints about brutality and endemic corruption in police ranks. Even "in elite living rooms of Chandigarh, Amritsar or Patiala, the decibel levels of criticism are almost deafening."[111] And, Prime Minister Narasimha Rao who knew that the security agencies were on threshold of a major break through, in an interview published in *Hindustan Times* of June 8, 1992, expressed his lack of knowledge of the much talked about package deal on Punjab. It was his Home Minister, S.B. Chavan, who had spoken repeatedly about that, giving various deadlines. So had the members of CPI and CPM who expected the government to initiate political process in Punjab.

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It was not long that the militants met a severe set back. The security forces did achieve a major breakthrough for various reasons. Firstly, some of the militant set ups by holding talks with Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar in early 1991, on assurances of safe passage, had uncannily exposed their contacts. That had been a Juvenile act, as none of the militant set ups had a liberated zone as a base for their operations. The security forces worked upon the lead provided by the militants for next year and a half to yield rich dividends. Secondly, the transition in leadership from Dr. Sohan Singh (who had gone away to Pakistan) to Bhai Sukhdev Singh Babbar caused loosening of control in some of the key militant groups. The genuine militants made desperate efforts to discipline their cadres and, in the words of Chandan Mitra, "restore an ideological content."[112] Before the militants could plug loopholes, the security forces were a success in penetrating the major set ups. They had been betrayed down the drain.

By mid-1992, the militant leadership had been reduced to the position of sitting ducks. The police in July-August cornered in their dens over a score of leading militants who were mostly killed in cold blood. It yielded the police force rich divided of Rs. 1.5 crore (Rs 15 million) in prizes.

Among those killed during the first phase were as follows:[113]

1. *Kalistan Liberation Force* (KLF): Gurjant Singh Budhsinghwala, Chief, Gurbachan Singh, Lt. General and Area Commander. Police also claimed prize on Navroop Singh Dhotian who took over from Budhsinghwala, by killing an innocent person. Dhotian was later admitted to be at large.[114]
2. *Babbar Khalsa International* (*BKI):* Bhai Sukhdev Singh Babbar, Chief, and Dr. Sahibi, a Lt. General.
3. *Bhindranwale Tiger Force of Khalistan* (*BTFK):* Rachhpal Singh Chhandra, Chief of Sangha group, Jagdish Singh Disha, Devender Singh, and Sukhram Singh Mazhbi, all Lt. Generals; and Hardev Singh Kalia and Jaspal Singh Pala, Lt. Generals of the other group.
4. *Khalistan Commando Force* (*KCF):* Sukhwinder Singh, Lt. General and Member Panthic Committee (Zaffarwal), and Jarnail Singh Bool, Lt. General; and Surinderjit Singh 'Shinda', Jagroop Singh 'Rupa', Paramjit Singh 'Pamma' and Dilsher Singh 'Shera' all Lt. Generals.

Police wove fanciful stories about encounters. Writing of death of Gurjant Singh Budhsinghwala and Sukhdev Singh Babbar, both of whom according to police died at Ludhiana within 10 days of each other, Gobind Thukral observed, "There are many holes in the police theory that these top militants had died in encounters, but the fact is that they died at the hands of the police."[115] According to informed sources, Budhsinghwala had been betrayed into police custody, and died of torture. Similarly, Bhai Sukhdev Singh Babbar had been taken into police custody, but had managed to swallow a capsule which brought about his death in an hour's time, when he was being driven from Patiala towards Ludhiana.[116] The police floated stories about Sukhdev Singh's affluent living, and living with one of the alleged Nabha sister, Jawahar Kaur, a neighbourer and even having a son from her. These were half truths aimed at character assassination.

There were a number of cases of mistaken identity and in the words of Capt Kamaljit Singh of Akali Dal (Kabul) "cash rewards given to the police for killing militants is turning them into mercenaries."[117]

The police in a written statement claimed that Bhai Sukhdev Singh was involved in 1,000 killings, including that of the Sant Nirankari Chief, Baba Gurbachan Singh. Cry went up that if he

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was the killer, why was Bhai Ranjit Singh, Head Priest of Akal Takht being tried for that in Delhi? The state government, unabashedly, reduced the number of killings attributed to Sukhdev Singh to 10, i.e. one per cent of the police figure, and that the Sant Nirankari Chief was not one of them.[118] The denial was necessitated by the fact that the trial in Tihar Jail was in final stages, and Sukhdev Singh figured no where in it. It only showed that both the police and the state government were resorting to untruths. The police statement also stated that only seven top militants had yet to be accounted for.

The death of Bhai Sukhdev Singh Babbar on August 9, led to retaliatory killing of 47 relatives of policemen in two days. That caused a lot of demoralisation of a force whose morale, as shown by Behla incident of June last, was already low. In view of the delicate stage of anti-militancy operations, Beant Singh was able to pressurise the Union Defence authorities not to reduce, much less withdraw as originally scheduled, the army presence in Punjab.

This led to manifold developments. One, Gill with the assistance of army and paramilitary forces mounted Operation Night Dominance. This exercise in area clearance in practical parlance meant, as a senior army officer confided, extermination or capture of the Sikh youth, 15-35 years of age, and brutal suppression of the civilian population living there. Army surrounded the villages while police and paramilitary forces combed the villages subjecting the people to uncivilized norms in violation of human rights or human dignity. This had the tacit approval of the union authorities. The CPI felt perturbed at the 'official lawlessness' and intensified exposing individual cases of police excesses.[119] A direct off shoot of Operation Night Dominance was that Manochahal group of Bhindranwale Tiger Force of Khalistan (BTFK) was wiped out.[120] Manochahal himself was believed to be in police custody, to be used at a later date as the situation demanded. Other prominent militants killed were the KCF (Zaffarwal) Additional Chief, Khajan Singh Sattowal on September 12, BTFK (Sangha)Chief, Balwant Singh, KCF(Panjwar) Chief Sukhdev Singh Sukha on September 17. With these, the police claimed to have eliminated all the known militants.

Two, conversely, Bhai Manjit Singh decided in August to float Akali Dal(Manjit) to operate at political level. This had direct link with the downward trend in militancy and upbeat mood of the police.

Three, the police now started enacting the drama of surrender by a large number of militants. At a public ceremony attended by Punjab Chief Minister, the star attraction was Gurdeep Singh Sibia of London, believed to be the founder of Babbar Khalsa International. He was immediately whisked away to the disappointment of the journalists present.[121]

Four, encouraged by downward trend in militancy, villagers started standing up to the terrorists scanning the countryside. And, to their horror, truth was bared when they came face to face with policemen indulging in such acts of rape, rapine and exactions. For instance, *Hindustan Time's* of September 26, 1992, reported three incidents in Jagraon, Samrala and Ropar police districts wherein the villagers in close combats killed, injured, and caught policemen of various ranks alongwith their AK-47 rifles. This did not cause any flutter in Delhi which regarded Punjab a colony.

Five, Beant Singh accepted the supremacy of KPS Gill in Punjab affairs and adopted a policy of all out confrontation of Akalis to please his central masters. He now started talking through his hat, literally his turban, and was now merely a puppet.

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Six, Beant Singh upstaged the opposition parties with peaceful holding of the civic elections to 95 municipal committees covering 1341 members in early September 1992. Voter turn out was 70 percent, with Akalis participating in the electoral process. Congress(I) won a clear majority only in 17 municipal committees. In others, Akalis, communists, BJP and independents registered massive victory. In 22 committees, Congress(I) drew a blank. Beant Singh with the help of police sought to improve the Congress position by marshalling support of dissident Congressmen who had won defying the official candidates, and independents. Police went to the extent of arresting elected members from opposition parties at the inaugural meetings to influence cooption of some members by the rump belonging to Congress(I).[122]

An indirect offshoot of the hardening of the government stance towards the militants was the judicial murder of Sukhdev Singh Sukha and Harjinder Singh Jinda of Khalistan Commando Force for killing Gen (retired) A.S. Vaidya.

Sukha and Jinda were tried under TADA by a designated court at Pune. A close reading of the judgement revealed that they were acquitted under TADA, but convicted under sections 307, 302 and 34 of the Indian Penal Code. The case should have gone to the Maharashtra High Court and not directly taken up by the Supreme Court. But the Supreme Court against all canons of law and equity was in a hurry to confirm their death sentences. The legal luminaries were aghast. Sukha and Jinda had no confidence in fairplay of the Supreme Court and did not even appeal for reconsideration, much less tender a mercy petition to the President.

The efforts of the Panthic leaders at various stages, and especially of Mann on October 8, to make the Chief Justice, M.H. Kania to see reason even at that late stage, only led to late night sordid drama at first at the residence of Chief Justice and later at the Supreme Court at 11 p.m. when two judges went through the formal motion of turning down the plea. It only helped to "undermine the credibility of Chief Justice's post",[123] and left rancour in the mind of the Sikh community as to the relevance of the judicial processes. Earlier on September 27, the Supreme Court had stayed action against 8 police officials who were facing disciplinary action because of their role in 1984 anti-Sikh pogrom.

Sukha and Jinda were hanged on October 9, 1992, amidst sounding of a general alert. Akalis gave a *bandh* call for three days. The same day victims of 1984 riots in Delhi staged a demonstration at the Boat Club, seeking action against the guilty, and CPM demanded of the government to explain the 'unexplainable delay' in calling in the Army to quell the riots in 1984 as charged by Chander Parkash of the police department, and the inordinate delay in punishing the guilty. An *Akhand Path* for Sukha and Jinda's salvation commenced at Akal Takht on October 16, but the government assured that there was no gathering. The top Akali leaders were arrested to prevent their participation in the *bhog* ceremony.

But the Indian authorities looked askance at the introduction of a concurrent House resolution in early October by Republican Congressman Ban Blaz, a member of the American House Foreign Affairs and Armed Forces Committees. It was co-sponsored by nine other legislators. It referred to Punjab as Khalistan and called for self-determination for the Sikhs in Punjab. It advocated that the Sikhs "like all people of all nations, have the right to self determination and should be afforded the opportunity to decide on their own future through a plebiscite sponsored or supervised by the United Nations." It also highlighted the Indian army and

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para-military force's committing "heinous brutalities with impunity in Khalistan". The resolution was referred to the House Foreign Affairs Committee. Dr. Gumit Singh Aulakh of Washington was the influential figure behind the resolution.[124]

The police and security forces continued their heinous operations. It simply meant insensate police atrocities rising above the constitution and "becoming its own worst enemy."[125] Some of the cases may be cited with advantage.

One, the militants killed 16 bus passenger on December 1, 1992. The police swiftly eliminated 19 Sikhs in a "fierce encounter" at Makhu in Ferozepur district. A *Hindustan Times* editorial (December 4), pointed out that "it is a moot point whether such retributive action, open to question, really serves the purpose."

Two, the police on December 25, picked up Bhai Gurdev Singh Kaonke former Jathedar of Akal Takht from his village and tortured him to death. This raised a storm of protest. The whole village of Kaonke in Jagraon police district was subjected to police highhandedness.

Three, on January 1, 1993, the police announced the death of Nasib Singh of Khalistan National Army in 'encounter'. Four days earlier, after few attempts, he had been handed over by Ganganagar police to Ferozepur police. So had been the case with a number of militants earlier arrested by Rajasthan authorities and handed over to the Punjab police. The Rajasthan authorities now told Punjab police not to enter Rajasthan without informing the local authorities. They also conveyed that henceforth they would not hand over anyone unless his involvement in terrorist activities in Punjab was proved by competent authorities. Similar action followed in West Bengal when a Punjab police party went all the way to Calcutta to shoot down an alleged militant shortly afterwards.[126]

Four, on January 6-7, 1993, Punjab police in the words of the correspondents of the *Sunday Observer* (January 10, 1993) outdid Gabbar Singh of *Sholay* fame in their ransacking of Biromajri and nearby villages in Fatehgarh Sahib district. A few days earlier, a group of policemen had raped three women of the village. On January 6, 1993, the villagers saw a posse of armed commandos or state terrorists coming to the village. The raped women identified one of them in the rape crime. They were disarmed and beaten by the villagers who also informed the nearby army camp. The police came to the site in strength and rescued their colleagues, using force. Thereafter, it let loose a reign of terror in Biromajri and surrounding areas. Even children and old men were subjected to police torture, and women humiliated. Houses were ransacked. Police smashed cycles, scooters, tractors, electric and electronic goods most wantonly. Terrorised, the people fled the village. The Association for Democratic Rights in vain sought judicial enquiry into the incidents and asked for punishing the guilty.[127]

Five, Kulwant Singh Saini a lawyer from Ropar was called to the police station on January 25, 1993, for release of a lady arrested that morning. His wife along with minor son chose to accompany him. They were tortured to death. The agitation by the Punjab, Haryana and Chandigarh lawyer made police to change its version of the incident. From his not being wanted in any case, police now showed him to be the kingpin of terrorism.[128]

Beant Singh, acting as a faceless robot, faced with police excesses in Kaonke, Biromajri and Ropar could do nothing against the almighty police. Jagmit Singh Brar, a party M.P. wanted the

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Chief Minister to admit moral responsibility and quit. Beant Singh was an amoral person and had no scruples or conscience.

Similarly terrorised were the Sikhs in Terai region during the autumn of 1992. A team of Citizens for Democracy and Peoples Union of Civil Liberties headed by Justice(Retired) Mahabir Singh which visited the area recorded gruesome details of police excesses.[129]

It was not surprising that the Bush administration, shortly before demitting office, in its annual report to the U.S. Congress on January 19, 1993, listed "significant abuses" in various parts of India, especially Punjab and Kashmir. It specifically mentioned of "police, paramilitary and army excesses against civilians", extra judicial actions (beating, extortion, torture, rape and fake 'encounter' killings) by police against detainees throughout India, incommunicado detention of prolonged periods without charge, using national security legislation. It also recorded India's failure to prosecute police and security forces implicated in abuses.[130]

It was amidst such an atmosphere of police hamhandedness that Panchayat polls were held in four rounds between January 16 and 22, 1993. The turn over was 82 percent. Congress(I) had nothing but to rely on police management. It was better this time than during the municipal elections. The opposition parties including CPM, CPI, Akali Dal and Bhartya Kisan Union gave many instances of their candidates being illegally detained by the police. In many cases, the nomination papers of Akali Dal(Mann) candidates were "torn by the police in presence of the presiding officers."[131] Harpreet Singh mentions that in Amritsar district a majority of Sarpanchas were "nominated by threat and not by the approval of the people." Further that, "'unopposed' election of approved candidates were managed by police". He named a large body of villages which had returned "supporters of terrorists (read, supporters of state-sponsored terrorists) as Sarpanchas at the behest of the Transport Minister, Master Jagir Singh".[132] In the words of Gobind Thukral, "The only vitiating factor, the misuse of the official machinery to tilt the results in favour of the ruling Congress, has caused the Government sharp rebukes not only from Akalis, but from once the friendly left parties."[133]

Encouraged by management of the Panchayat polls, Beant Singh now threatened to scrap the 1925 Gurdwara Act and later at Hola Mohalla celebrations at Anandpur Sahib in March sought popular support to reject Anandpur Sahib Resolution of which he showed little comprehension. He also showed lack of comprehension of the forces within the Congress working at tandem with those of *Hindutava* which of late had made rapid strides.

The rise of *Hindutava*, initiated by Indira Gandhi on the eve of 1980 elections, got spurt under Rajiv when the doors of Babri Masjid-Ram Janambhoomi, closed since 1949, were thrown open and a *shilanayas* laid for construction of Ram Temple. The BJP naturally sought to steal the show, at first through Lal Krishan Advani's *Rath Yatra* in 1989, and later through the *Yatra* of Murli Manohar Joshi from Kanya Kumari to Kashmir to hoist tricolour flag on the republic day of 1992 at Srinagar. But Joshi, faced insurmountable hurdles in Jammu, and, with the cooperation of Prime Minister Narasimha Rao, was airlifted by the Indian Air Force to Srinagar. But the tricolour, Joshi brought all the way from Kanya Kumari, refused to go up. When he applied force, the antenna snapped and the flag fell flat on the ground. Thereafter, a grim faced Joshi hoisted the army-installed flag.[134]

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This cooperation between Sangh *Parivar* and Narasimha Rao government got further enlarged during 1992 to rope in the highest judiciary, the Supreme Court. Mann was not far wrong to say that the demolition of Babri Masjid on December 6, 1992, was not possible without the cooperation of Sangh *Parivar*, Government of India and the Supreme Court. Incidentally, Supreme Court had earlier passed a "stay order' on construction of a platform at the site, but had bent backwards to accommodate the forces of *Hindutava* which had defied the stay granted.[135] Now in December, the union government, after imposition of President's rule in U.P. on December 6, gave full 40 hours to those gathered at Babri Masjid site to construct a temporary temple structure. They were given convenient transport to disperse.

The *Hindutava* forces' attempts to overwhelm the union government caused rumblings in sections of Congress(I). The opposition from within forced the hands of Prime Minister to stop the BJP rally slated for February 25, 1993, at the Boat Club, Delhi. Rajesh Pilot, the new Minister of Internal Security, toyed with the idea of inducting K.P.S. Gill as Secretary of his Ministry. Gill and Punjab police played their assigned role in foiling the BJP rally in the Capital. Some BJP leaders were treated roughly.[136] The union government soon realised that it cannot do to the caste-Hindus, the ruling race, the same it did to the Sikhs in Punjab, Muslims in Kashmir and other parts, and Christians or tribals in northeastern India. The proposal to bring in Gill was eventually dropped.

The impending deployment of Gill to New Delhi raised the question as to what the police should do with Manochahal held in police custody since September last. Involved also was the huge prize money held on his head.

This led to Manochahal being killed in a contrived police encounter near Tarn Taran on February 28, 1993. It was given out that Manochahal had been staying in a bunker in the house of his sister, whose husband was Inspector in the CRPF. Lack of action against the Inspector indicated that Manochahal's stay was with the approval and under supervision of the Punjab police. An inspired report by Harpreet Singh in the *Hindustan Times* of December 9, 1992, indicated that two months earlier, Pakistani ISI (Inter Services Intelligence) had taken three top militants, Wassan Singh Zaffarwal, Daljit Singh Bittu and Gurbachan Singh Manochahal to China for being imparted training - the last two having reached there via Nepal. Possibly, Manochahal had been promised release from police custody, but that was not to be. Disgusted at the police antics, Manochahal shortly afterwards resigned as Jathedar of Akal Takht to which he had been appointed in 1986. Now, on his death, Punjab police allegedly recovered his diaries. These revealed his political links with Congress(I) high ups in New Delhi. It was also disclosed that Bhai Manjit Singh was the top beneficiary of the monetary dispensation from him.[137] It cannot be gainsaid whether Manochahal was tortured to death, or was simply shot, to yield the police Rs. 25 lakhs (2.5 million) prize held on his head.

In the wake of the announcement of Manochahal's death, Punjab police announced on March 2, 1993, the surrender by 101 militants including half a dozen "'A' category terrorists"[138] In August last, Gill had mentioned of only 7 top militants left. And of them, half a dozen had been eliminated in the following months. It was upto the police to increase or decrease the number of militants at large at a given time, irrespective of the contradictions involved. For, no questions could be asked.

And yet on March 7, 1993, police claimed to have shot dead Deputy Chief of KCF-Panjwar, Bachittar Singh Sensera alias Arjan Singh in Amritsar district, and two days later it claimed killing of

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Dashmesh Regiment's Chief Lakhwinder Singh alias Kehar Singh in a "fierce encounter" near Batala.[139] Gill again showed his supremacy in the power set up in Punjab in enforcing government's foiling of the Badal Akali Dal rally at Jalandhar on March 14; and a Longowal Akali MLA was beaten up in Punjab Assembly the following day by Congress(I) ministers and MLAs in presence of the Speaker. The sentence to life imprisonment in end-March 1993 of Bhai Ranjit Singh, Jathedar, Akal Takht, by R.P. Gupta, Additional Sessions Judge, Delhi, on charges of murdering Baba Gurbachan Singh, Nirankari Chief, and his not even giving him the rebate of nine years he had already spent in Jail, was quite reflective of unjust times. Gill saw the hand of Khalistan Liberation Force in bomb blasts in Bombay, while Maharashtra police and the union Home Ministry had no such hallucinations.

Rebuffed, Gill in early April 1993, to emphasise his indispensability to the Indian set up in Punjab, (he was already on extension after superannuation), opined that Babbars and Khalistan Liberation Force are still strong and that Babbars especially still retain their puritanical impression in the rural Punjab". He also vouchsafed that "their hideouts are safe."[140] Gill sought to derive propaganda mileage by stage managing public surrender of Kulwant Singh Babbar, of Akhand Kirtni Jatha, on April 14, 1993, before the Chief Minister. The Punjab police shortly afterwards, however, shot a number of Babbars in 'fierce' encounters.

For achievement of New Delhi's wider objectives it was essential that the police should maintain its supremacy over the civil administration. Because of symbiotic relationship established between its killing of the Sikh youth and getting rewards, apart from other benefits that went with power and pelf without responsibility, the police was also anxious to do so. Already, the police budget had shown a 30 time increase to Rs. 350 crores over a decade. Despite elimination of militancy in Punjab, killing of Sikh youth continues. It will be too much to recall the reports in the media about the people eliminated in euphemistically called 'encounters', cross-firings or otherwise. Suffice it to say that over a period of about 20 months from mid-1992, according to Chief Minister Beant Singh, the police garnered, 40,000 rewards for its action against the militants. At an average, 7 rewards per day. It must have killed atleast one lakh youth besides gobbling crores of rupees in prizes overheads of the Sikh 'militants'.

The converse side of police operations was their conducting tonsorial or shearing operations involving the Sikh youth. Over the period, the movement caught on. And, Harpreet Singh of *the Hindustan Times* reported that the Sikh youth in large numbers "are getting their hair shorn and beard shaved off. . . The youth were doing so to convey the police that they had nothing to do with militancy or Sikh struggle."[141] Not only that, even the Sikh policemen in order to ingratiate themselves with their seniors, cast off their *Keshas* in large numbers.

The overall impact of the twofold police operations may be cited with advantage

* KPS Gill raised three special hit squads which operate with impunity all over northern India including U.P., Gujarat, Maharashtra and as far as Bengal. The killing by Punjab police squad of a Sikh couple Ranjit Singh and his wife Rani in East Calcutta on May 17, 1993, stunned and surprised not only the Marxist government of West Bengal, but also invited adverse editorial comments from leading dailies.[142] Another glaring instance was the killing at Kota in Rajasthan while in its custody by Punjab police of Dilbagh Singh Uppal, a businessman from Bombay; he had been taken into custody at Bombay on July 6, 1993. A significant feature of all these extra-judicial killings was that neither any government - centre or state - nor any of the numerous

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High Courts or even the Supreme Court took cognisance of these highhanded acts of Punjab police. A public interest petition filed by spirited Dr. B.L. Wadhera, an Advocate in the Supreme Court, about killing in their sleep of Ranjit Singh and Rani by Punjab police at Calcutta on May 17, failed to activate the Supreme Court to pressurise Punjab police to even own up the killings, much less explain the reasons for that. After a year, on May 13,1994, with the consent of Punjab and West Bengal governments, the Supreme Court transferred the petition to Central Bureau of Investigations (CBI). Despite the ongoing CBI investigations, the Punjab police killed one Karnail Singh Koila on June 21,1994, in an 'encounter' in Howrah without intimating West Bengal government. The Punjab police cares two hoots for the rule of law, and the Supreme Court has shown selective interest in goings on in Punjab.

* Inbetween cropped up the row between Punjab Provincial Civil Services (PCS) officers and the Punjab police over the issue of police corruption. The police conveniently unearthed a plot to kill the puppet Chief Minister, Beant Singh. The PCS officers as a body showed solidarity with their brethren, and had the support of even officers of Indian Administrative Services on the points involved. Chief Minister repeatedly asserted that Punjab police was the holy cow: "Nothing against the police", he kept telling every one. The stir ended up in whimper in August 1993.[144]
* Benazir Bhutto's coming to power in Pakistan in October 1993 helped yield India rich dividends in expulsion of some leading militants from Pakistan. Admittedly, she in 1989 had helped Rajiv Gandhi vis a vis Sikh militants as quid pro quo for his helping her against Zia and in return for lowering India's profile in Sind. Considerations in 1993 were again similar. Dr. Sohan Singh, former head of Panthic Committee and half a dozen other prominent militants were arrested by Punjab Police on arrival at Kathmandu by the Pakistan International Airways in end October. Indian authorities had been suitably tipped. Sohan Singh was brought to India, while others were shot dead. The Punjab Chief Minister, Director General of Police and Intelligence Chief announced on November 4, 1993, their arrest from near Chandigarh for obvious reasons.[145] The news management added to the stature of KPS Gill.

Verily, KPS Gill had become beau ideal of the bosses in New Delhi. Speaking at a book-release ceremony at Delhi, on November 30, 1993, Gill poignantly observed that the "issues like Chandigarh or river water are not the real problems. "He went on, "The main grudge of the Sikhs against the Hindus was the domination of Brahminical society." With the quantum of killings he had done, thinking process of the Sikhs, he averred, had now changed.[146]

All sections of Brahminical society of northern India are for this change in outlook of the Sikhs. That applies to upper caste Hindus of all the major political parties - Congress(I), BJP, all factions of Janta Dal, and the Communists. That is also true of various instruments of government - executive, legislature and even judiciary.

The Supreme Court's not activating itself, despite a public interest petition on May 17 Calcutta killing of the Sikh couple was one thing. In sharp contrast was the Supreme Court's striking a vocal and discordant note at doings of Punjab police in the case of a caste Hindu, a member of the ruling race, in September-October 1993.

The facts of the case were simple. A caste Hindu lawyer, one Mr. Gogia, had enticed the major daughter of jat Sikh Deputy Commissioner of Hoshiarpur. Could the Punjab police be permitted to do to a caste Hindu what it was doing to hundreds of thousands of the Sikhs?

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* For a fortnight the Judges of the Supreme Court ranted and roared at a reluctant Punjab police. They spent their valuable time, over hundreds of thousands of other cases pending for years, on Gogia case.
* The Chief Justice on September 20, wanted the Punjab Counsel to convey the 'concern' of the highest court to the Chief Minister and the Director General Police. Justice S. Mohan asked the Punjab Counsel, "Is there rule of law or that of the jungle there." Then the Chief Justice, Mr. Justice Venkatachaliah said unless the couple was produced before the Court by 4 p.m. next day, the Court "may be constrained to issue an order holding that the administrative machinery had broken down" in Punjab. The Chief Justice asked the Punjab Counsel to tell the Chief Minister that "the Court did not consider this case as another routine Punjab detention." He meant, detaining the Sikhs was one thing, a caste Hindu quite another.
* The Gogia couple, released by the police, appeared in Supreme Court on September 23. Another two caste Hindus whose habeus corpus was admitted by the Supreme Court on September 22, were also released by the Punjab police.[147]

The Supreme Court, as such, asserted its facile supremacy over the Punjab police as custodian of rule of law in cases of members of the ruling race. The Judges backed out from indicting Punjab Police which had been doing so much in advancing the cause of Brahminism. The Punjab police emerged unscathed. The Supreme Court in the process formally laid down new concept of rights and justice available to citizens as individuals under the constitution. It virtually meant: show us the man, we shall show you the law.

Another facet of this demeaning situation was that Sikhism came under subversive attacks from within.

* The raking up of controversy on *Sikh Rehat Maryada*, Sikh Code of Conduct, in the second week of June 1993 by Damdami Taksal headed by its Acting Chief, Baba Thakar Singh, is to be seen in that light. A couple of weeks earlier, New Delhi was toying with the idea of holding the much delayed elections to the SGPC. Gobind Thukral mentions of Congress (I)'s desire to prop up Damdami Taksal to serve as its cat's-paw.[148] This controversy came to an unceremonious end in mid-August after a convoluted statement issued by Wassan Singh Zaffarwal blaming the 'government agents,' especially Tohra, for bringing the maryada issue to the centre stage of Sikh affairs to hamper the fight against 'Delhi Durbar'.[149]
* With the police ascendancy, the Sikh *sants* and *deradars*, savants and heads of diversionary sub-sects or hospices, of various hues bestirred themselves to the centre stage of Punjab's social and religious life by organising congregations, singly and jointly. By selectively quoting from *gurbani*, Sikh scriptures, they sought to project the rightful place of a living guru and their relevance in the ongoing milieu. They sought to reinduct, in a subtle and not so subtle a manner, the Brahminical practices like idol or *murti* (picture) worship apart from asserting their own relevance as spiritual leaders to mould the society on new lines in deviation to the one laid down by the Sikh Gurus. The convening of the first *Sant Samagam* at Amritsar in December 1993-January 1994 under the auspices of Sant Makhan Singh of Dera Sant Amir Singh, Sattowali Gali, Amritsar, was one such major attempt to "subvert the Sikh theology.[150] The *Samagam* showed that the Sikh sants of Malwa and Doaba by and large had been completely bowled over by the government's influence while those of Majha were partly affected. The Sikh *sants* were providing a handle to strike at the roots of Sikhism.
* A seminar conducted in early 1994 under the auspices of Sant Sucha Singh of Jawadi Kalan, Ludhiana, too tended to cause misgivings in the Sikh circles.

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The Sikh *sants* must understand that Guru Nanak's Sikhism is based on revelation. So is the case with Islam and Christianity, while Hinduism is not. He had laid down the basic postulates of Sikhism and widely debated the theological issues with the followers of various schools of Hindu thought of his times. Brahminism's coming into power in post-1947 India, does not change its fundamentals, to invite a reconsideration of the discarded propositions.[151]

* The onslaught on Sikh theology at the hands of Christian missionaries, now articulated by their cohorts, Peshora Singh and Piar Singh received adequate response from Akal Takht. Harjot Oberoi of Vancouver University, British Columbia,[152] is another recruit espousing re-Hinduising of Sikhism. The basic Christian attempt has been to engulf the considerable Sikh population in North America and United Kingdom. They are considered vulnerable.[152a]

This onslaught has awakened the Sikhs to the threat posed. But there is vast gulf in the resources of the two sides, and the Sikhs are facing an unequal fight. Broadly speaking, Brahminism has been in league with McLeodian offensive - the equation being established during the period of McLeod's stay at Batala in early 1960s when there was complete bi-polarisation of Hindus and Sikhs because of the struggle for Punjabi Suba. This has been an ongoing process.

A saving grace has been the interest shown by human rights groups and American Senators culminating in President Clinton's speaking up for "the Sikh rights".

* The visit of US Deputy Asstt Secretary of State, John R. Mallot to India in latter half of May 1993, brought into sharp focus the US-India divergence on India's "human rights problems." It was attracting a lot of attention in the United States.[153]
* The US State Department and Defence Security Agency in a presentation to the Congress in July 1993 withdrew tributes paid earlier to the Indian army's record on human rights in its operations against 'terrorists'.[154] This was an upshot of the final report on India submitted by the outgoing Bush administration to the Senate.
* Peter Geren and 12 other members from both sides introduced on August 5,1993, a concurrent resolution in the House of Representatives asking for plebiscite to allow the Sikh nation "the right of self-determination". A news release by the Council of Khalistan, Washington, indicated that its President, Gurmit Singh Aulakh was the moving spirit behind the resolution.[155]
* This invited authoritative comments from the US Deputy Asstt. Secretary of State, John Mallot, that, "We are opposed to the creation of any sovereign state of Khalistan", and that "Punjab is not disputed territory, and, from our viewpoint, *it is an integral part of India*."[156]

Hitherto, only Kashmir was integral part of India, the way *Dalits* were integral part of Hinduism. Did Mallot pick up this terminology of Punjab being an integral part of India from his talks with the Indian leaders during his visit to New Delhi in May last? Or, was it an independent American assessment? Punjab had really, by now, degenerated into being an integral part of India the way Kashmir is of India, or *Dalits* are of Hinduism. Mallot's description of the situation, for once, was for the real.

* The American concern culminated in a letter dated November 17, 1993, from Gary A. Condit and 23 other members of the Congress to President Clinton requesting for the US "diplomatic

role in the Khalistan crisis", and US' playing "the role of an honest broker between the Sikh nation and the Indian government."

* Shortly afterwards followed Amnesty International Report on involuntary disappearances in Punjab and Kashmir, subversion of legal proceedings, arbitrary arrests, a systematic pattern of cover-ups and the virtual impunity enjoyed by the security forces to perpetrate unspeakable human rights abuses.[157] President Clinton's reply of December 27, 1993, to Condit spoke of the need "to end police abuses" in context of "the human rights situation of the Sikhs in Punjab", and his "desire for a peaceful solution that protects the Sikh rights."[158]

Unexceptional words. But these helped to create a storm in caste-Hindus of all denominations and their cohorts in northern India. Though Clinton had not spoken of Khalistan, Government of India felt outraged as if speaking for an end to police abuses and for Sikh rights was a heinous crime. The Indian Foreign Office Spokesman in a statement on January 23, 1994, rejected any statement that sought "solution that protects Sikh rights". Half a dozen former Foreign Secretaries chose to surrender their intelligence when in a joint statement they berated Clinton's concern for Sikh rights as if he was questioning "India's territorial integrity". To caste Hindus of BJP, Janata Dal, Communists and Chandra Shekhar(who had once spoken against Operation Bluestar), Clinton's remarks were misplaced and uncalled for. The Youth Wing of the ruling Congress(I) Party under protection of police bayonets organised a protest march to the US Embassy in New Delhi.[159]

The reaction of the Sikh organisations was in sharp contrast. They equated Clinton to Nawab Sher Mohamad Khan of Malerkotla who in early 18th century had protested to the Governor of Sirhind against his unjustly punishing two younger sons of Guru Gobind Singh. The Sikhs adopted resolutions at Gurdwaras in Punjab villages and other parts welcoming Clinton's concerns and sent copies to the American Embassy in New Delhi. They also organised a peaceful march to the American Embassy to convey their thanks to President Clinton.

Another saving grace was *tankhaiya* Buta Singh's presenting himself before Akal Takht and subjecting himself to punishment on January 26, 1994, for his heinous crimes committed in supporting the government at the time of Operation Bluestar and thereafter. Some saw in it Congress(I)'s deep game to get him rehabilitated within Sikhism to put him as a frontman to challenge Akali hold over the Gurdwaras in the forth-coming Gurdwara elections. Tohra's hand for the purpose was also talked of. Others saw in it his succumbing to the family pressure, and pressure of his conscience. Whatever be the case, this was a welcome development. Though Buta Singh mentioned his religion as his personal affair, agnostic Harkishan Singh Surjeet saw in it negation of India's secularism. Congress(I) members were perplexed at the timing, when the controversy over Clinton's remarks was at its apex.

In view of the American concerns, attempts were made to humanise the police image, and later project it as champion of people's rights.

* The attempts made in mid-1993 to establish liaison between the police and the villagers, especially Sarpanchas, proved abortive, as people spoke in unison against the *thana* level police officers who were thoroughly corrupt. It was generally surmised that *Khaki* (the police uniform) was still a terror in the Punjab countryside.[160]
* Notwithstanding the set back, by autumn KPS Gill proceeded to organise seminars on "Indian Police and Human Rights" under his auspices. That was a bold attempt to give a facile lift to

police image. A beginning was made in early October 1993, with a two-day seminar at Chandigarh. A number of journalists and others participated and expressed widespread skepticism at police claims.[161]

The true feelings of a cross section of people were expressed a couple of months lateral a seminar organised at Jalandhar on December 12, 1993, by Punjab Jagriti Manch. The speakers were more forthright to say that such type of seminars organised by police were attempts to hide the ugly violation of human rights by the security forces.

* Dr. Amarjit Singh Narang of Delhi University stated that Chandigarh seminar was an attempt to give false hope to the people to lull them to silence. It was reflective of upsurge of fascist tendencies.
* Tapan Bose, the famous Film Director, highlighted that KPS Gill was attempting to give three clear messages. One, terrorism has come to an end in Punjab; two the unseen waves of separatist movement are still strong; and three, judiciary and intellectuals have been unsuccessful. Therefore, there is still need for Gill who is indispensable.
* Kirpal Singh of Chief Khalsa Diwan compared Gill's talking about human rights to recitation of holy scriptures by Satan.[162]

How would have Indians reacted if the British had held such a seminar under the auspices of General Dyer after Jallianwala Bagh?

K.P.S. Gill met a major setback when he orchestrated a public ceremony for Bhai Kanwar Singh, founder of Akal Federation, and an ideologue, in March, 1994, at Chandigarh. Kanwar Singh spoke of his, along with his wife and 5 year old son, being taken into custody in Nepal in mid-1993; they were tortured by the police who threatened to liquidate the family. In a choking voice, he said, "I will prefer to be cut into pieces, than surrender". Taken aback, Gill and police officers indicted denied 'torture', but immediately whisked him away,[163] Bhai Kanwar Singh represented the true Khalsa spirit of defiance of oppressive authority.

Multiple factors activated the political elements in early 1994. Interested elements sought to asphyxiate the new consciousness by launching a move to bring about an opportunistic Akali unity - the unity of contradictory forces. Tohra was in the lead. Talwandi, Barnala and other discredited leaders who had frequently stabbed the Panth in the back were privy to the move. Mann was overwhelmed by the infiltrators. Or, was this another case of miscalculation? In a foxy move, they approached Prof Manjit Singh, Jathedar of Akal Takht, to bring about, what they euphemistically called, Panthic unity. As stated earlier, Tohra has now for two decades effectively used the plea for 'panthic unity' as a weapon of offence and guile. Parkash Singh Badal in a deft move saved his party from being overwhelmed. The only good point that came out was the decision by Akal Takht to set up a think tank to monitor religious matters.

The formation of Shiromani Akali Dal(Amritsar) in April 1994 only showed the bankruptcy of its leaders. This was proved at the by-election polls at Nakodar and Ajnala in May 1994. Despite large scale rigging as vouchsafed by the media men,[164] and indirect police help, Congress(I) won Nakodar seat with a reduced margin. Akalis (Badal) won convincingly at Ajnala.

Chief Elections Commissioner, T.N. Seshan, ignored Beant Singh government's corrupt practices at Nakodar for two reasons. Firstly, he was under psychological pressure from the union

government over its move to clip his wings by bringing in an amendment of the Constitution at a special session of Parliament in mid-June. Akalis reprehensibly had no member in either house of Parliament. Secondly, more probably, as the Sikhs were adversely affected by these malpractices, Seshan, who has been part of Brahminical conspiracy and who had earlier postponed Punjab elections in 1991 under mysterious circumstances, could choose to close his eyes. It was for similar reasons that a short while ago he had postponed the Ajnala by-election and not the one for Nakodar, though Punjab Chief Minister's violation of the model code of conduct was applicable to both.[165] It was fortuitous circumstance of Supreme Court's upholding Uttar Pradesh Government's plea, that he had to agree to reschedule the postponed Ajnala by-election to May 31, as against May 26, earlier. For similar reasons, he did not order that counting of votes at Nakodar be withheld for a couple of days till voting at Ajnala had taken place.

The death of Punjab Governor, Surendra Nath, in an aircrash which wiped out nine other members of his family, on July 9, 1994, brought to light in a dramatic manner, the rapacious and predatory character of the Punjab administration under the longlasting President's rule, and the diarchy thereafter with Beant Singh as Chief Minister.

The union Home Minister was right on the spot in Chandigarh after the news of Surendra Nath's death; he took away bundles from his residence, of what he regarded papers containing state secrets about Sikh genocidal policies pursued by the union government. According to information available with the Prime Minister's Office, Rs. 1.87 Crores (18.7 mil) in cash, seven Kg of gold (it is not know whether this was with Swiss or some other markings, or simply ingots prepared by the local goldsmiths by melting ornaments looted from the people) and Jewellery worth Rs. 40 crores (400 mn), and documents of property worth Rs. 250 crores (2.5 bn), were recovered from his house.[166] It also came to light that Surendra Nath had withdrawn Rs. 22 lakhs (2.2 mn) in one go from the Secret Service Fund a week before the induction of Beant Singh in mid-1992. The quantum of availability of funds for misuse could be gauged from the fact that, according to Beant Singh a sum of Rs. 6,600 crores (66 bn - this is treated as a loan from the union government to put Punjab in a debt trap)had been spent on the security forces "to counter terrorism".[167] The rationale is provided by B.K. Chum of the *Economic Times* in that, "The alleged recovery from Raj Bhavan needs to be seen in the light of amassing of huge wealth by terrorists, many Punjab police and civil administrators during the hey day of terrorism and later by some Punjab ministers after the popular government returned."[168]

This amassing of huge wealth by Surendra Nath has shocked out of wits many a people in Punjab. Ashwini Kumar, a senior editor of *Punjab Kesri* group - consisting of *Punjab Kesri* (Hindi), *Hind Samachar* (Urdu) and *Jagbani* (Punjabi) with a combined circulation of 6 lakhs (600,000), in a signed editorial in all the three papers of October 18, expressed his utter surprise at Surendra Nath's avarice in amassing such a huge wealth. He also indicated that the government wants to suppress the issue as it does not want it to go to the National Human Rights Commission.[169] Khushwant Singh, a virtual police spokesman now for some time, shaken by the disclosures cast doubts on his "ability to judge human beings",[170] for Surendra Nath, according to one report had "purchased his way to power" as Governor of Punjab and milched it.[171]

What has come to light is obviously the tip of the iceberg.[170] Punjab has undergone extortions at the hands of a vulturine administration on a vast scale under President's rule and after, in the process dwarfing the exactions of Ahmad Shah Abdali during the 18th century. An enquiry into the exactions by KPS Gill and his cohorts in the police and para military forces, and ministers in

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Beant Singh government, could very much be in order to reveal the fuller dimensions of the ordeal Punjab has undergone during the period.

It is debatable whether the notice issued by Punjab and Haryana High Court, on a public interest petition, calling upon the central and Punjab governments to disclose the details by February 12, 1995, of ill gotten wealth of Surendra Nath will yield much. There has been a baffling silence on the part of authorities so far, may be, as a prelude to a white washing operation. Nothing much can be expected from National Human Rights Commission headed by Mr. Justice Ranganath Misra, who has been part of Brahminical conspiracy against the Sikhs, and otherwise has not much credibility.

One can only recall Simarnjit Singh Mann's once calling for Nuremberg type of trials - where the plea for call to duty, and New Delhi's proposal to grant immunity to all police and paramilitary personnel in Punjab in 1992 for all the crimes they did, incase of Akali Dal's fighting the forthcoming elections and coming into power, would not cut ice -to mete justice to the culprits. That remains a distant possibility, as yet.

An encouraging sign has been the Supreme Courts's severe indictment on September 16, 1994, of Punjab Police headed by KPS Gill as "an errant, high handed and unchecked police force". It expressed complete distrust in the state police in light of KPS Gill's casual appraoch to the abduction and liquidation by the Punjab Police of seven members of a Sikh family on October 29, 1991. Gill's assertion before the Supreme Court about maintaining the "majesty of law" only invited Court's derisive retort, "Not, if things are left to the Punjab Police."

The Court directed the Director, CBI, to personally conduct an enquiry into various aspects of the case and submit a report within the specified time. The *Hindustan Times* in an editorial titled, "A lawless force" on September 19, 1994, wrote, "It is time for the Centre to note the grave implications of the Supreme Court's damning indictment of the Punjab Police and initiate steps to ensure that the latter is not allowed to violate the law as it has chosen to with impunity." Earlier in July, the Punjab Police's beating up two journalists of the *Statesman* in a five star hotel under the shadow of Parliament House in New Delhi because of their asking KPS Gill some inconvenient questions, over his election as President of Indian Hockey Federation, had invited severe indictment of the press.

Gill's extended two year term as the "slave overseer more heartless than any alien beast", expires in December 1994. There are clouds over the question of his being granted further extension, but the dogged determination of the union government to overwhelm Sikhism, may still see it through.

The change at the top in the police set up in Punjab, if it comes about, will only be for tactical reason. It will not signify a change in policy, which would need certain modifications of fundamental character in Indian polity.

The continuous atrocities on the Sikh detenues held under TADA in Rajasthan during 1994 despite Parkash Singh Badal's talking to BJP Chief Minister, Bhairon Singh Sekhawat, in the matter, and the killing of half a dozen Sikhs in cold blood and causing serious injuries to over two dozen others held under TADA in Pilibhit Jail on November 8-9, 1994, by the police of Mulayam Singh headed Samajwadi Party- Bahujan Samaj Party coalition in U.P., shows that animus against the Sikhs has taken deep roots in northern India, and cuts across caste or class lines. A mitigating factor in

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Pilibhit has been that a Muslim MLA of the ruling Samajwadi Party brought to light the Pilibhit killing and is agitating the atrocities.

The Brahminical war against the Sikhs goes on with no holds barred. The provisions of Indian Constitution, of right to life, liberty, equality, of being meted civilised behaviour, have become irrelevant to the votaries of the Sikh values. The Brahminical order especially over northern India feels that it has administered body blows, which it hopes to be fatal, to the corporate body of the Khalsa, and that it is in the process of being overwhelmed.

The Sikhs continue to be victims of the constitutional terrorism or state terrorism that the government of India is practicing at present. Firstly, there must be a reversal of the whole process of Brahminical attempts to overwhelm Sikhism; instill in the Sikhs a sense of belonging, and that the Sikhs have a right to assert their identity. Secondly, to borrow from the *Times of India* (editorial, April 1, 1992), the Sikh problem "needs a conceptual response by offering them a form of autonomy that can be reconciled with an accommodative interpretation of the federal idea enshrined in Indian constitution" but that, "This will, however, remain far beyond the realms of possibility without deep introspection by the Indian political class of which there is, alas, no sign yet."

Bharat Mata is looking towards a liberator. Will Indian political system throw up one? Time is running out.

Footnotes:

1. Cf. Shekhar Gupta's Special Report on KPS Gill, *India Today*, April 15, 1993, pp. 62-66.
2. Cf. pp. 415-16 ante.
3. Dhiren Bhagat in *Indian Post* (Bombay), April 24, 1988.
4. *India Today* May 31, 1988, p. 28.
5. Avinash Singh, "Battle for Golden Temple", *Hindustan Times*, May 22,1988, magazine section, p. 1; "Punjab: The Battle Escalates", *India Today*, May 31, 1988, pp. 24-28.
6. Shekhar Gupta and Vipul Mudgal. "Operation Black Thunder: A Dramatic Success", *India Today*, June 15. 1988, p. 78.
7. *Sunday*. May 22, 1988, p. 27.
8. Ibid, p. 29.
9. Ibid, p. 30.
10. Ibid.
11. Of the total of 197 persons who surrendered, leaving aside 17 women and children, militants accounted for about 50 men. About 40 were Hindus who had grown their beards. The bulk of the rest were infiltrators from the security agencies.
12. *Sunday*, May 22, 1988, p. 32.
13. *India Today*, June 15, 1988, p. 85.
14. Taking advantage of appointment of new headpriests, Barnala sought pardon for defying the Akal Takht in February 1987. Eventually, he landed himself before Prof. Darshan Singh Ragi, who made him to undergo atonement for his lapses in December 1988.
15. *India Today*, June 30, 1988, pp. 44-45.
16. In another two months, Giani Sohan Singh Headpriest of Golden Temple and Bhan Singh Office Secretary of SGPC, were shot dead, while Mal Singh Ghuman General Secretary SGLC,

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was wounded in an attack attributed to Khalistan Liberation Force. *India Today*, August 15, 1988, p. 35.

17. *New York Times*, June 12, 1988, p. A-11.
18. The killing of SSP, Sital Das and his Deputy (Detective) Baldev Singh Brar in their office in Patiala city by Dalbir Singh who shot himself after shooting the two, in August 1988, brought to light the existence of such under-cover agents. Cf. Vipul Mudgal, "Punjab: The Underground Army", *India Today* September 15, 1988, pp. 74-77.
19. *India Today*, July 15, 1988, p. 44.
20. Ibid, October 15, 1988, p. 50.

20a. It took the couple - the leady and husband - 7 years to have the Supreme Court to order in October 1995, Gill's being proceeded against under the FIR. Prime Minister reportedly quite unhappy at the turn of the event.

21. *India Today*, August 15, 1988, p. 52.
22. *The Sunday Observer*, September 5, 1988, p. 1.
23. *India Today* September 15, 1988, p. 59.
24. Ibid, October 31, 1988, pp. 69-73.
25. Ibid, November 30, 1988, p. 56.
26. For a detailed account of trial of Satwant Singh and others, see also, Ritu Sarin's "Cracking the Conspiracy", *Sunday* November 20, 1988, pp. 25-31, and "The Final Judgment", *Sunday*, August 14, 1988, pp. 22-24; David Devdas, "Indira Gandhi Assassination: The Suspended Sentence", *India Today*, December 31, 1988. pp. 42-45; and TPR, "The Final Act", *Frontline*, January 21 February 3, 1989. pp. 25-37.
27. For a full discussion on evidence for and against Kehar Singh, and where Supreme Court went wrong, see "Kehar Singh Story", *Illustrated Weekly of India*, December 4, 1988, pp. 8-17.
28. *Probe India*, February 1989, p. 23.
29. *The Hindu* (International Edition), February 11, 1989, p. 4.
30. *India Today*, February 28, 1989, p. 165.
31. Inderjit Badhwar and Vipul Mudgal, "Jammu Riots: A Paralysed Administration," *India Today*, February 28, 1989, p. 64.
32. Ibid, p. 69.
33. Vipul Mudgal, "Punjab: Anguished Cry", *India Today*, March 15, 1989, p. 78.
34. It was in this melee that a nephew of the author was taken into custody in September 1988 at Ludhiana. The family was not told of boy's being killed the same night. That made the author, then a senior officer in the Indian Foreign Office to contact Additional Secretary (Police) in the Union Home Ministry, and at his instance K.P.S. Gill at Chandigarh and SSP Ludhiana Mr. Sumed Saini. While in Gill's office, the author learnt that the police had taken into custody about 30,000 school going boys who had taken *amrit*, baptism, and they were not being released. Later, the author met at Chandigarh the head of CRPF who entrusted a very senior officer to find out about the boy. He stated that Sumed Saini SSP Ludhiana and one Bahuguna head of CRPF unit in Ludhiana, had liquidated a large body of the Sikh youth, and that, he said, was more or less true for whole of the Punjab.
35. *India Today* March 31, 1989, pp. 29-31.
36. *Sunday*, March 19, p. 18.
37. *India Express*, March 7, 1989.
38. Kanwar Sandhu, "Punjab Police: Uniformed Brutality", *India Today*, September 30, 1989 pp. 34-36.
39. Naveen S. Garewal in *India Express*, September 2, 1989.
40. n. 38, op cit.

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41. *India Today* October 15, 1989, pp. 58-60; *Indian Express*, September 22, 1989.
42. Kanwar Sandhu in *India Today*, October 15, 1989, p. 60.
43. Ibid.
44. *The Indian Express*, July 10, 1989.
45. Ibid, December 6, 1889.
46. Barnala termed these as mischievous to create an adverse situation for the new government. *India Today*, December 31, 1989, p. 61.
47. *The Indian Express*, November 12, 1989.
48. *The Times of India*, January 3, 1990.
49. Ibid.

49a. Ibid, January 10, 1990.

50. Joyce J.M. Pettigrew, *The Sikhs of the Punjab* (*London*, 1995), p. 93.
51. Ibid, January 12, 1990.
52. *The Hindu* January 12, 1990.
53. Kanwar Sandhu in *India Today*, January 31, 1990.
54. Ibid; cf, *India Today*, October 15, 1990, p. 48.
55. *The Times of India*, January 23, 1990.
56. Ibid. January 20, 1990.
57. *The Indian Express*, February 18, 1990.
58. Gobind Thukral in *Hindustan Times*, February 22, 1990.
59. *The Indian Express*, April 5, 1990.
60. *India Today*, April 15, 1990, p. 45.
61. Other members were: Justice (Retd) Rajinder Sachar, Prof. Rajni Kothari, Lt. Gen (Retd) J. S. Aurora. M.P., George Verghese, Dr. Amrik Singh, Ms Jaya Jaitley, Ms. Madhu Kishwar. N. D. Pancholi, Tejinder Ahuja, and H. S. Phoolka. *Indian Express* April 18, 1990.
62. *The Hindustan Times*. June 24, 1990.
63. Kanwar Sandhu in *India Today*, August 31, 1990. pp. 66-71.
64. Kanwar Sandhu in *India Today*. October 15, 1990. p. 49.
65. Ibid.
66. *India Today* October 15, 1990, p. 45.
67. *The Hindustan Times*, October 13, 1990.
68. *India Today*, December 31, 1990, p. 37.
69. *Hindustan Times* and *Economic Times* of January 1, 1991.
70. *The Indian Express*, January 6, 1991.
71. Askar H. Zaidi in *Times of India*, April 28, 1991; Tavleen Singh in *Indian Express*, April 18, 1991.
72. Ibid.
73. Note by Samir Lal.
74. Note by Shekhar Gupta.
75. *The Hindustan Times*, February 20, 1991.
76. Ibid. February 28, 1991.
77. *India Today*. March 31. 1991, p. 59.

77a. "For Eyes Only" in Government is a classification higher than top secret. It is design to be shown to a specific person, in this case the successor(s) on assumption of office.

78. *The Hindustan Times*, April 22, 1991.
79. Ibid.
80. Kanwar Sandhu in *India Today*, April 30, 1991, pp. 73-75.
81. *The Hindustan Times*, April 26, 1991.
82. Ibid, April 25, 1991.

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83. Avinash Singh in Ibid, April 26, 1991.
83a. Joyce Pettigrew (n 50) quotes a KCF partisan to report that Dr. Sohan Singh went over to Pakistan in April 1991. Also that some from the Panthic Committee did not trust Mann and played disruptive role as a result of infiltration of government intelligence agencies.
84. *Hindustan Times* June 20, 1991. Certain stooges of Congress (I) who were close to Manjit Singh described him sincere but politically immature.
85. Cf. *India Today*, July 15, 1991, p. 53.
86. *The Hindustan Times*, August 18, 1991.
87. Ibid, August 22, 1991.
87a. Cf. Joyce Pettigrew n 50 p. 109.
87b. For a partial list of real butchers, see. Ibid, pp 108-109.
88. Kanwar Sandhu, "Punjab Police: Official Excesses", *India Today*, October 15, 1992, p. 89.
89. Avinash Singh in *the Hindustan Times*, November 21, 1991.
90. *The Financial Express*, November 13, 1991.
91. Punjab: *Gill Returns India Today*, December 15, 1991, p. 49.
92. For text of the report, see *the Spokesman* Weekly, September 28, October 5 & 12, 1992.
93. Khushwant Singh, *My Bleeding Panjab*, (Delhi 1992), p. 76.
94. For group photograph of Surender Billa and his fake Sikhs, see, *Current* weekly, August 5, 1989, p. 11.
95. *Hindustan Times*, February 4, 1992.
96. Ramesh Vinayak in *India Today*, February 29, 1992, p. 36.
97. *The Hindustan Times*, February 4, 1992.
98. Gobind Thukral, in *the Hindustan Times*, February 13, 1992.
99. *The Hindustan Times*, February 5, 1992.
100. Total votes 13.1 million (mn). Votes polled 3.145 mn. Votes rejected 138,000. Valid Votes 3.01 mn, Congress vote 1.4 mn.
    * 25 candidates won polling less than 5,000 votes each.
    * 26 candidates won polling between 5001 to 10,000 votes each.
    * In all 77 candidates won on polling less than 15,000 votes each.
    * In 2,000 villages polling ranged from 0 to 1 percent. Cf. Dinesh Kumar in *the Times of India*, February 22, 1992.
101. *The Times of India* February 22, 1992.
102. Kanwar Sandhu, n. 88 op cit.
103. *The Hindustan Times*, April 11, 1992.
104. Ibid.
105. Ibid, May 24, 1992.
106. Ibid, April 7, 1992.
107. Ibid, July 1, 1992.
108. Dinesh Kumar in the *Times of India*, May 1, 1992.
109. Karanbir Singh Sidhu, District Magistrate, Amritsar, who conducted an enquiry into the 28 hour long Behla encounter held that the police picked up seven villagers from their homes and forced them to go into the hideout of the militants of Bhindranwale Tiger Force of Khalistan on June 8-9, 1992. Though there were no bunkers in the hideout, the police brought in 1600 security personnel to face only two militants. At the end of the encounter the police declared the civilians used by it as cover, to form part of militant outfit, firstly to claim a bigger prize for itself, and secondly, to prevent compensation to the next of kin of the civilians used. Their bodies were not handed over to their relatives but cremated surreptitiously by the police. See, B. S. Bawa in *the Pioneer*, 18 June 1992.

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Behla encounter showed the low morale of the security personnel, and their mercenary character.

110. *The Hindustan Times*, June 21, 1992.
111. Chandan Mitra in *the Hindustan Times*, May 26, 1992.
112. Ibid, May 27, 1992.
113. Gobind Thukral in *the Hindustan Times*, August 14, 1992.
114. Shahid A. Choudhary in *Probe India*. November 1992, p. 13.
115. *The Hindustan Times*, August 14, 1992.
116. For Simranjit Singh Mann's comments see the *Spokesman*, September 14, 1992.
117. n. 114 op cit.
118. *The Hindustan Times*, August 22, 1992.
119. See, Satya Pal Dang in the *Spokesman* Weekly, August 10, 1992, September 14, November 16, 1992; and Hindustan Times November 5, 1992, et. al.
120. n. 1 14 op. cit.
121. *The Indian Express*, August 23, & September 6, 1993.
122. *Hindustan Times*, September 9, 1992; *Probe India*, November 1992, pp. 13-14.
123. Krishan Mahajan in *the Indian Express*, October 11, 1992; also Ritu Sarin in the *Spokesman* August 3, 1992.
124. *The Hindustan Times*, October 4, 1992.
125. Kanwar Sandhu, n. 88, p. 82.
126. *The Hindustan Times*, January 6, 1993.
127. Gobind Thukral in *the Hindustan Times*, January 20, 1993.
128. Shivanand Kanavi in *the Sunday Observer*, April 11, 1993 for detailed report.
129. *The Spokesman* Weekly, February 22, and March 1, 1993.
130. *Hindustan Times*, January 21, 1993.
131. Gobind Thukral in *the Hindustan Times*, January 22, 1993.
132. Harpreet Singh in *the Hindustan Times*, January 23, 1993.
133. *The Hindustan Times*, January 25, 1993.
134. Ibid, 27 January, 1993.
135. It became a big joke that the Judges did not know the meaning of the word stay, and that they committed contempt of their own court.
136. Kanwar Sandhu in *India Today*, March 31, 1993, p. 125.
137. *The Hindustan Times*, March 4, 1993.
138. Ibid, March 3, 1993.
139. Ibid, March 11, 1993.
140. Ibid. April 7, 1993.
141. "Fear Psychosis Still Stalks Rural Youth", Ibid, May 4, 1994.
142. e. g. see. Ibid, editorial, May 21, 1993.
143. Ibid, May 14, 1994.
144. Ibid August 12, 1993; also Gobind Thukral in Ibid, September 1, 1993.
145. Cf. Ibid, November 1, 1993.
146. Ibid, December 1, 1993.
147. Correspondent's Despatches, Ibid, September 21 to 24, and October 5, 1993.
148. Ibid, May 22, 1993.
149. Ibid, August 11, 1993.
150. *Sant Sipahi* (Amritsar, Panjabi monthly), February 1994, pp. 25-31, also subsequent issues.
151. Cf. Giani Bhagat Singh in *Sant Sipahi*, Amritsar May, 1994, pp. 16-18. It is another matter that the Centres of Comparative Religion hold seminars or discussions on discordant viewpoints.

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152. Indira Gandhi had been greatly upset at the decision of Vancouver University in early 1980s to establish a Chair in Sikh history, consequent upon the Sikh people in North America raising the necessary funds. New Delhi exerted pressure on Ottawa to establish instead a Chair in Punjabi language.

The establishment of Chair in 1985 came at a lime when New Delhi was relentlessly carrying on a campaign against the Sikh people in North America at their adverse reaction to the events of 1984 back home. New Delhi felt that a competent person heading the Chair in Punjabi could turn it into a centre of learning not only in Punjabi language and literature, but also in Sikh religion, theology, history and polity. It, therefore, made subtle moves to have the Chair occupied by a *patit*, renegade, Sikh (having nothing to do with Punjabi language or literature), who, during his sojourns earlier in Delhi and Canberra, had shown propensities to serve as a cat's paw for Brahminism, and sour the Sikh achievement.

The Sikhs of North America must understand that creating a Chair is not an end in itself. Of much more importance is to have it occupied by a right type of person. 'Man is superior to weapon' constituted the core of Mao's thought, and derived its sustenance from- Guru Gobind Singh's dictum, *chirion se main baaz turaon*. I will have sparrows to tear the hawks.

152a. Admittedly, the Sikh youth in the West is facing problems of adjustment in the new social milieu. In Canada, there is a concerted attack on the Sikh values in the guise of promotion of multi-culturalism. What sort of multi-culturalism the Canadian society has promoted during the last two centuries? The Anglo-Saxons and the French, despite living together for over two centuries, are on the verge of separation. In the 1995 referendum, the people of Quebec, thanks to sizeable immigrant population, failed to vote for independence only by one percent. According to some observers, the French arc bound to opt for independence in the next decade or so. Then BC and may be Alberta shall too opt for independence and the residual provinces may choose to become part of the USA. While, the Canadian society is facing disintegration, (he 'comrades' from within the Sikh community are propagating the concept of multi-culturalism with a view to irretrievably damage Sikhism in Canada.

153. *The Hindustan Times*, May 28, 1993.
154. Ibid, July 24, 1993.
155. Ibid. August 12, 1993.
156. Emphasis added. M. C. Menon in Ibid, August 13, 1993.
157. Ibid, December 18, 1993.
158. For facsimile copies of two letters, see, *Sant Sipahi*, March 1994, pp. 19-20.
159. *The Hindustan Times*, February 22, 1994.
160. The *Observer* of Business and Politics, August 9, 1993.
161. The Hindustan Times, December 5, 1993.
162. For proceeding of Jalandhar seminar, sec *Punjabi Tribune*, December 13, 1993.
163. The Hindustan Times, March 30, 1994.
164. Harpreet Singh in *the Hindustan Times*, May 27, 1994.
165. In U.P. Chief Minister Mulayam Singh violated the code of conduct in one constituency but by elections to all six seats were put off.
166. Cf. Ashwani Kumar's signed editorial in *Punjab Kesri* group of dailies of October 18, 1994; Gobind Thukral in the *Hindustan Times*. October 25, 1994 and B.K. Chum in Economic Times, October 27, 1994. Kamaljeet Rattan in *Economic Times*, November 14, 1994, mention of Surendra Nath's assets to amount to Rs. 750 crores.
167. The *Hindustan Times*, November 11, 1994.
168. Cf. Chum in 165 op cit.

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169. Ashwani Kumar's signed editorial has the title, *saman sau baras ka*, *pal bhar ki khabhar nahin*, One accumulate goods to last a hundred years, but one is not sure for a moment's life. This could very well be given the title from a line in Guru Nanak's verse, *papan bajhon howai nahin*, *moian saath na jai*. Wealth can't be accumulated without sin, but it does not accompany one on death.
170. Khushwant Singh in The *Sunday Observer*, November 13, 1994.
171. Kamaljeet Rattan in n. 165, op. cit.

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BOOK SIX

LOOKING BEYOND

12
Future of the Sikhs

What is the future of the Sikhs in India? Will Sikhism be able to survive as a vibrant faith? Or, will it be overwhelmed by Hinduism, the boa constrictor of all the faiths born in India?

I

It is now almost a decade and a half, that Indira Gandhi initiated a considered policy of genocide of the Sikh people. To justify that in the eyes other countrymen and to the world, she at first sowed the seeds of violence in the Sikh community. She subverted the instruments of peaceful *morcha*, agitation, perfected by Akalis in 1920s, and used by them in independent India, of course, with minimal returns. Side by side, she initiated the policy of state terrorism against the Sikhs as a people. It took two forms. Terrorism by the police and the security forces was supplemented by the rise of state-sponsored terroristic groups under the auspices of the security agencies. They indulged in international smuggling and violence. Both the instruments were perfected around 1982. They fed and fattened each other.

To provoke the Sikhs as a people, Indira, after a lapse of over two centuries, borrowed a leaf from the Mughal administration and revived the policy of religious persecution of the Sikhs. It, at first, took the form of tonsorising of *keshas* of the Sikhs through instruments of the state. Showing disrespect to the Sikh religious scriptures by the police and the security forces constituted the other side of that aspect. Sporadic incidents of both these types in U.P., Punjab and Jammu were supplemented by large scale ones in Haryana in 1982-83. Then it took the from of unprovoked and wanton attack on the Sikh places of religious worship.

The Operation Bluestar and its timing to coincide with Guru Arjan's martyrdom anniversary were pointers to a resolve to inflict maximum damage on the Sikhs. The armed force's terming of Guru Gobind Singh as the fountainhead of, what they called, terrorism, defined the contours of the objectives. Every baptised Sikh was a terrorist, or a potential terrorist, or the one who looked like a terrorist, to be summarily dealt with. The extirpation of the Khalsa in due course became the lone-term objective of the security forces Indira thought like Adi Shankaracharya and acted like Mir Mannu. Her mass scale Sikh-genocidal plan, *Operation Shanti*, encompassing in a broad sweep the Sikhs all over India was thwarted by her assassination. Pre-empted, the Sikh genocidal plan petered out in the form of Sikh-pogrom in November 1984, of serious character, in Congress ruled Hindi or cow belt areas.

This policy was carried forward by her son and successor Rajiv, and willy nilly later by V.P. Singh and Chandra Shekhar governments. It has been intensified with the induction of P.V. Narasimha Rao, an old war horse of Indira vintage, as the Prime Minister. The oppressive machinery was perfected by K.P.S. Gill, Director General of Punjab Police, who introduced a graded system of prizes for killing of the Sikhs, termed terrorists. Thus motivated, the police and paramilitary forces have become mercenaries with a vested interest in continuation of killings.

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The goings on in Punjab since 1980s are to be seen in this light, Grave provocation and persecution of the Sikhs caused a backlash. It gave rise to militancy, the way the government had foreseen and wanted it. The plain terrain of Punjab prevented the rise of full fledged guerrilla movement. It gave birth to numerous militant groups, and individual acts of heroism. None of these groups, except perhaps Babbar Khalsa and that too for different reasons, accounted for more than a 100 members. And, of the total acts of terrorism, militants accounted for hardly 15 percent of them. The police and security forces, and state-sponsored terroristic groups, accounted for the bulk 75 percent, with smugglers and criminal elements mainly aligned with Congress(I) leaders, for the residue.

All these incidents, attributed to militants by the State through its media management, have enabled the government to indulge in mass scale killing of the Sikh youth. The police and security forces have excelled in two things - fake encounters and involuntary disappearance of the Sikh youth while in custody.

In a decade in between the two census of 1981 and 1991, anything between 1 million to 1.2 million (10 to 12 lakh) Sikh youth have been liquidated one way or the other. In the post-1991 census period, thanks to killings, only Punjab has registered a negative growth rate in population.

The mass scale killing of the Sikh youth and massive induction of Purbeas in Punjab to reduce the Sikhs to a minority in Punjab by the end of the century are two main ingredients of Congress(I) policy. As of now, this policy has found broad acceptance with the Hindus of northern India, whether votaries of Congress or Bhartiya Janta Party(BJP) or even Janta Dal s of various brands. The Communist Party of India(Marxist) (CPM) under the influence of Surjeet, thinks that once the Khalsa identity is overwhelmed, the Sikhs, alienated from Brahminism, would fall a prey to Marxism.

This broad alignment of forces draws extensive support from the general body of upper caste Hindus who are well entrenched in India's body politic. Hinduism is making an earnest and an all out attempt to militarily stamp out the Khalsa, the way Buddhism was earlier wiped out for all practical purposes.

II

Khushwant Singh, who, without showing an understanding of the finer points involved, lends support to state repression of the militants, has, of late, shown an implicit understanding of Congress(I) objectives.

In preface to his book. *The Sikhs*, (Alien & Unwin, 1951), he had surmised that Sikhism by end of the century would cease to exist. In 1991, he concluded the revised edition of the second volume of his work, *A History of the Sikhs*,(*Oxford*), by saying, "At times, it appears that perhaps the Khalsa have run the course of history prescribed for them and that the Gurus in their inscrutable wisdom have given them the leaders who will fulfil their death wish."

The distinction in Khushwant Singh's two formulations above, is result of his perception of the government's long term objectives. In 1951, he spoke of extinction of the Sikhs; forty years later, he talks of that of the Khalsa.

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Of late, there has been a perceptible change in the views of Khushwant Singh. This is reflected in his interview with the *New York Times* in end March 1993. He regards the demolition of Babri Masjid on December 6, 1992, as a watershed in the rise of the forces of Hindu resurgence, which, he now concedes, has been coming up since 1947. He showed little foresight when he sponsored the candidature of Lal Krishan Advani for election to Lok Sabha from New Delhi constituency in 1989, but now feels that the victory of BJP at the polls would bring about disintegration of India, and emergence of Khalistan, Kashmir, Christian Northeast, etc. He is yet to take full circle, for he is still looking for "a truly secular Hindu", which Jawaharlal Nehru, Mohammad Ali Jinnah and Nirad C. Chaudhuri, all agree is a contradiction in terms.

This mischief of distinction between the Sikhs and the Khalsa was purposefully propped up in the present century by M.K. Gandhi, and serves as a driving force of the Indian polity since upper caste Hindus regained power in 1947.

III

The origins of Brahminical hostility towards Sikhism of Guru Nanak may be traced to the third quarter of the 16th century. It was during the era of Guru Amar Das (1552-74) that they had presented a petition to Emperor Akbar against Sikhism. The opposition became virulent during pontificate of Guru Arjan, leading to his martyrdom. The Brahminical Hindus attained their objectives, when Guru Hargobind was driven out of Amritsar in 1634 and Harimandir fell to their cohort Minas. They were startled at the creation of Khalsa, and pursuing Chanakya *niti* successfully inveigled Emperor Aurangzeb to launch an imperial campaign against the Sikh movement, permitting the Khalsa little time to consolidate itself. They played a nasty role in the first half of the 18th century. They penetrated Sikhism at the hour of its triumph only to subvert the Sikh kingdom under Ranjit Singh. The Brahminical hostility got a new form under Swami Dayanand in the last quarter of the 19th century, and his pan-Hindu mantle fell on M.K. Gandhi, another Gujarati *bania*.

Gandhi throughout his life endeavoured to prevent the Sikhs from asserting their distinct, independent, entity. He was rabidly anti-Sikh. To him, the Khalsa code of conduct was most offensive, and unacceptable. He declared Guru Gobind Singh persona non grata to Hinduism. This part of Gandhian heritage was in conformity with the Gangu-Brahmin heritage of Jawaharlal Nehru, and was carried forward by him, his descendants and cohorts.

Gandhi understood the nature of change that was being wrought in mid-1947. So did Jinnah. The Sikhs lacked a towering leader. The collegiate type of Sikh leadership at the crucial stage in mid-1940s was heavily infiltrated by the Congress stooges. It chose to go by lollypops offered by Gandhi and Congress since 1929, and failed to get ironclad guarantees. The Sikhs lost their battle even before putting their signatures in May 1947 opting to throw in their lot with the Hindus, without suspecting treachery which was writ large in Gandhian and Congress formulations. The Congress leaders during the freedom struggle had made it explicit that by secularism they meant to show the Muslims some accommodation, but none to the Sikhs.

After Indian independence, Gandhi fired the first salvo when he said that they would not abide by the Privy Council judgement about the Sikhs maintaining *kirpan*, sword, now that the Hindus had emerged sovereigns after 800 years of slavery. A few days before his death, in January 1948, he explicitly wanted the Sikhs to tonsure their *keshas*, sacred hair, discard Khalsa symbols, and

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merge in the general body of Hinduism. He showed his willingness to accord Guru Nanak the status of an avatar of Vishnu.

The position of Gandhi or for that matter of Jawaharlal Nehru, who, impelled by centuries old family animosity against the Sikhs, implemented Gandhi's policy, was determined by the Wesphalia system (adopted in 1648 after 30 years bitter religious wars) which governed the inter-se relationship of states. Under it, it was the ruler's religion that was the determining factor and not the rights of the people, much less of the minorities. The doctrine of collective security enshrined in the U.N. Charter did not impinge on the use of force against peoples within a state, but only when the borders were crossed.

The U.N. had yet to evolve the charter of basic human rights (which it did in December 1948). Of late, liberals have tended to play up the principles of democracy and self-determination, of federalism, local autonomy and international surveillance of minority rights. International Law is gradually evolving. In 1975, Helsinki Accord codified human rights; their violation could be referred to the Council of Europe. More recently, the lawyers of the American Law Institute widened the concept of international law to include revealing words, "as well as some of their relations with persons. . . in the conduct of states". Increasingly, individual and minority rights are treated more than national concerns. The U.N. Security Council resolutions 687 and 688 deeply impinge on Iraqi sovereignty and internal affairs. That sets a precedent. It was President Carter's concern for human rights that partially destablised the strong government of Shah of Iran in 1978. The American commitment to liberal democracy and human rights can serve as a pressure on an errant third world country.

In that context, the Sikh community in America can play a positive role in projecting the Sikh struggle for a dignified survival in India, in a language of human rights and individual dignity that Americans understand. Already, in a number of cases, especially of atrocities against women, concern of American Congressmen had its impact on the government of India. It is clear that so far as the Sikhs are concerned India is a terrorist state practising large scale terrorism against the Sikh people. Those who masterminded anti-Sikh pogrom have got full state protection. Thinking men have termed the position of the Sikhs in India to be worse than that of blacks in South Africa before the new dispensation in 1994. India wants the world at various forums to condemn Pakistan for encouraging terrorism across its borders in Kashmir and Punjab, but considers legitimate its practising of state-terrorism against the people of Kashmir and Punjab, because they fall within its own borders. There has been a selective blurring of that sort of distinction in international affairs.

IV

Already there are signs of turmoil out to tear the Indian social fabric. To begin with, Indira's mobilisation of caste-Hindus for her coming into power second time in 1980 provoked the Hindu juggernaut. It was later articulated by Vishwa Hindu Parishad and Bajrang Dal. The BJP has been its political beneficiary, while Congress(I) is not far behind in placating it for political ends, notwithstanding a section's uneasiness at these developments.

Its basic precept has been that when the Muslims held the sway, they demolished Hindu temples and built mosques instead. Now, when the Hindus have reemerged as the ruling race, they want to reverse the process and right the presumed wrongs. The demolition of Babri mosque and its replacement by a temporary Ram structure in December 1992, by the forces of *Hindutava*

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(represented by Sangh *Parivar* with full cooperation of P.V. Narasimha Rao led Congress(I) Union Government, apart from the Supreme Court) was the beginning of that process. It constitutes the tip of the iceberg and has endless potentialities. Involved in the process is the resolve to withdraw from the Muslims, constituting sizeable numbers all over India, the basic accommodation shown earlier within the framework of the Hindu brand of secularism.

The threat to withdraw this concession was always there. Those not falling within the framework of Hindu-secularism at the time of framing of the Constitution in 1949 were brazenly told by Sardar Patel, then Deputy Prime Minister, to migrate to Pakistan. Later, Jawaharlal Nehru, generally presented as the beau ideal of a truly secular Hindu, contended that if the Muslims of Kashmir, who constitute a majority there, exercised their right of self-determination to opt for Pakistan, or even independence from Hindu domination, that would seal the fate of the considerable Muslim community in other parts of India. As such, the Kashmiri Muslims must opt for modus vivendi with the Hindus for the security and welfare of their coreligionists in India. It was presented as a quid pro quo.

Notwithstanding, the Muslims in India were subjected to endless communal rioting. The basic cause was the conflict of economic interests between the caste Hindus and the downtrodden ones, which was directed by the crafty former into the latter's ire against equally economically backward Muslims.

The rise of Bahujan Samaj Party led by Kanshi Ram, and later Janta Dal's Mandal plank, articulating the community of interests of backward and the downtrodden people as well as the minorities, constitutes a serious threat to the upper caste Hindus. The Rath Yatra of Lal Krishan Advani in 1990 confused and confounded the Hindu downtrodden and caused a setback to the alignment, except perhaps in Laloo Prasad Yadav governed Bihar.

Another aspect that adds to the woes of the common man is the deep economic malaise, the spiralling inflation, and continuous revelations about grave economic offences and financial scandals involving the high ups, eroding their credibility. It seems, as if, India has become another banana republic.

All these have potentialities to push the man in the street to the end of the precipice, and cause an explosion which may ignite a revolution.

The Soviet Union, based on the Marxist concept of a welfare state, which universally influenced even the capitalist societies, could not last three quarters of a century. Over-centralisation was the main enemy. The Gandhian system of polity, based on the principles of deceit and fraud, would complete its half century in 1997 in great turmoil, and be overthrown if still extant.

V

What about the attitude across the borders towards the Sikh aspirations in India?

The Pakistani leadership would have been less than human if it had not seized the opportunity to fish in the troubled waters, especially when it offered low cost operations. The fleeing of the Sikh youth, across the borders because of state terrorism virtually amounting to genocide in 1980s, presented Pakistan with untold opportunities.

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Theologically speaking, Islam has been closest to both Judaism and Sikhism, But because of historical processes, there has been a state of hiss between the Muslims in the sub-continent and the Sikhs. Though this was upshot of Brahminical manipulation, both the Muslims and the Sikhs fell into the trap, and the 18th century left behind a bitter legacy. The liberal policy adopted by the Sikh Misls and the Kingdom under Ranjit Singh did not help bridge the gap. More so, as the Muslims had feelings of their being former rulers while the Sikhs themselves fell into the Brahminical wile and identified themselves as sword-arm of a decadent Hinduism. The caste-Hindus, when it suited them, pampered the Sikhs by acclaiming them as their protectors. This led the Sikhs to develop woolly ideas as to the real character of Brahminical Hinduism which throughout history, when politically in ascendance, has been intolerant of non-conforming faiths, and betrayed its imperialist character.

The Hindus' distancing themselves from the Sikhs in post-independence era, as in their disowning of Punjabi language, and denying them a place under the Sun in the Indian set up, caused an undercurrent of sympathy for the Sikhs among Pakistani Punjabis. The Sikh youth, born in post-1947 era, had no memories of Muslim hostility which their fathers experienced, say, at the time of partition in 1947. Their contacts with Pakistanis, as in their various visits to Pakistan on pilgrimages to the Sikh shrines, was nothing but wholesome. Pakistanis in common talks praised them as straightforward and open hearted people like themselves, as against the scheming and calculating Hindus. In the developing situation in 1980s, to the Sikh youth the Pakistanis seemed to be enemy's enemy. Could not they be friends?

But, what has been the ground reality?

Firstly, Pakistanis - the establishment, the drug and mafia barons, the arms merchants have been helpful to the Sikh groups to equip them with small arms available in plenty on Pakistan-Afghanistan borders, but on payment of funds mainly canalised through the Sikhs in U.K. and North America. The Pakistan authorities, or euphemistically speaking their powerful Inter-Services Intelligence(ISI) has seen to it that the Sikh groups, like the Afghan Mujahedeen, do not get united, but maintain their distinct entity, and often work at cross purposes. May be, a splintered movement falls an easy prey to manipulation; but it also gets vulnerable to infiltration and subversion. One can give the Pakistani authorities the benefit of doubt because of their knowledge of large scale infiltration of the Khalistani set ups by the Indian intelligence agencies.

Secondly, the emergence of a number of Sikh set ups all over the Western world, some by people genuinely committed to the cause, others at the instance of the Indian intelligence organisations, and the Sikh youth's fleeing across the borders to Pakistan and getting a receptive treatment, helped to bolster a number of organised Pakistani groups in the United Kingdom - North-West, Midland, London - and all over Europe to entice the impressionable, teenage, Sikh girls into a facade of a marriage; and these girls have by and large ended up in prostitution houses in Pakistan or have been sold to elderly Arab Shaikhs in the Gulf countries. This has not been the work of individuals, but of organised gangs, who have at their disposal limitless funds. Pakistani youth are used as front persons for the Sikh girls, and girls from other parts of India because of advantage of language. Such incidents cast dark shadow over the real Pakistani intentions vis a vis the Sikhs. But surprisingly, the Sikhs in U.K. and the western world have shown an imperfect realisation as to the threat they are facing, to chalk out measures to live upto it. The efforts of

spirited Dal Singh Dhesy in retrieving these young hapless Sikhs girls in Birmingham from certain ruination need to be supplemented all over U.K. and Europe.

Three, no government in Pakistan, whether of President Zia ul Haq or of his successors - be it Nawaz Sharief or Benazir Bhutto - has lent support to the Sikh aspirations, much less the concept of Khalistan; or raise its voice against grave human rights violations at any international forum, or otherwise. They have kept a scrupulous silence. Rather, Benazir admittedly extended Rajiv Gandhi help against the Sikh militants in 1989. She repeated the performance in 1993 when she came back to power, again as a quid pro-quo.

A future India-Pakistan armed conflict would pose a grave threat to the Sikhs. The Pakistanis may use the Sikh card in a future conflict, while the Brahmin-Bania establishment in New Delhi may seek implementations of Indira's 'Operation Shanti' to stamp them out. The Sikh strength in the armed forces has now been reduced to just four percent. The Sikhs shall have to guard themselves from being caught in the jaws of a nut cracker. That emphasises their need to have a wise and enlightened leadership, well versed in power politics and Ostpolity.

VI

The unforeseen changes in the world polity during the last few years, envision an open-ended approach. The communist system was overthrown in East Europe peacefully, except in Romania which had a most oppressive regime. The Soviet Union broke up, again peacefully: it still being a super power with nuclear arsenal and military might intact. There was violence in some parts, born out of ethnic strife. Yugoslavia, the then Chairman of the non-aligned movement, splintered with parts falling apart, again amidst ethnic violence.

Would that serve as a warning to the 'Hindu' leadership in India? Would they learn something from it? Is India capable of throwing up a statesman who can restructure the Indian polity, *a la* soviet pattern, into a commonwealth? Or, some other viable pattern and prevent a slide towards the Yugoslav way? Would modern Hindu learn from history which his ancestor could not? Is restructuring inevitable? Or, can that be thwarted? Would the failure of the system come so suddenly that the people would be left gasping for breath? There are already signs of that. These questions are glaring at us, as broad day light.

VII

Dr. Hari Ram Gupta, a down to earth historian of the Sikhs, has surmised that "Sikhism will emerge as one of the world's greatest religions at the turn of the century." He must have been moved by his reading of the Sikh history.

Guru Nanak proclaimed his universal mission in 1499. Guru Arjan started compilation of *Adi Granth* in 1599: that gave the Sikhs their scripture. Guru Gobind Singh created the Khalsa in 1699 and brought to fruition Guru Nanak's mission. Ranjit Singh captured Lahore in 1799 and laid the foundations of the Sikh Kingdom that placed the Sikhs on the map of the world. Bhai Kahan Singh of Nabha wrote his work, *Hum Hindu Nahin* (We Are Not Hindus) in 1899: that, rather than anything else, did the most to de-Hinduise the Sikhs and put them on the right course. Now, they are heading towards 1999. That would mark completion of 500 years of Guru Nanak's proclaiming

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his universal mission. Are the Sikhs going to attain their objectives for which they are struggling, as of now? Is Sikhism heading towards a new era of hope and progress?

Christianity took five centuries to come out of the influence of Judaism and charter a completely independent course. Is Sikhism likely to break completely from Hinduism? Especially, Brahminical Hinduism, with caste distinctions and human inequalities? Is the Khalsa going to reassert the pristine purity of its mission? For that, the dominant Jat section shall have to shed the insularity of its character. Will they be able to do so? Will they be able to revert to the situation prevalent in the first half of the 18th century when a *rangretta*, and a meanest Sikh, was equal to the highest? In short, will the Sikhs be able to shed the impact of Brahminism on Sikhism? Much will depend upon that, as to how Sikhism shapes up in the 21st century.

A word of caution. Since the establishment of the Sikh Kingdom in 1799 was not a wholesome development, the history bisected the forthcoming century as a unit in Sikh history into two equal halves. In 1849, the Sikhs lost political power. Again, the Sikhs did not fully imbibe the spirit of Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha's *Hum Hindu Nahin*. That led to the Sikh leaders putting on blinkers to the threat posed to them by the Hindus like Gandhi and company. And, the Hindus in violation of all the solemn pledges made by them during the freedom struggle, imposed on the Sikhs a constitution, with a view to push them out of the national mainstream in 1949. And, the contours of the mainstream have since been shifting to the disadvantage of the Sikhs. The course of the Sikh history in 21st century would depend upon the quality of their achievement in 1999, and the way they figure out in the successive decades. They shall have to be cautious as they progress during the second quarter of the 21st century. One, only wishes that when they approach the middle of the 21st century, they are not condemned to repeat the unsavoury part of their history, of a century's bisecting itself at 2049, to their detriment.

VIII

This brings us to the state of present Sikh leadership.

It must be stated at the outset that during the present century, the Sikh leadership has shown a critical lack of capability to do strategic thinking, much less strategic policy planning.

It can be stated without any fear of contradiction that the present leadership derives its sustenance and inspiration from the Gurdwara reform movement, 1920-25. It is a matter of fact that the movement did not throw up a man of vision to charter the Sikh Panth and the Sikh polity in the midst of interaction of complex political forces thrown up as a result of the decolonisation process. Incidentally, that was in sharp contrast to the Singh Sabha movement in last quarter of the last century's throwing up Prof Gurmukh Singh whose vision, dogged determination and pragmatic approach led to the Khalsa *rehat muryada*, code of conduct, emerging as the focal point of Sikh revivalism.

To a discernible observer, it would be obvious that the present Sikh leadership is as fractured as it was in mid-1940s, on the eve of Indian independence - rather decolonisation of the sub-continent - when the infiltrators and time servers were on the top. It cannot deliver the goods.

Surprisingly, the Sikh polity continues to be managed by semi literate, Jathedar types, that have now for long outlived their utility. The Japanese samurai in 1869 renounced their privileges

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and ushered Japan as a modern state. Would the traditional Sikh leadership do so, and pave the way for emergence of a new leadership? Do they have a realisation as to what is at stake? It is the very survival of the Khalsa brotherhood! Isn't it the time for well wishers of the Panth to rise to the occasion and respond to needs of the time, admit their inadequacy and subordinate their self to the good of the Panth. Reprehensibly, the All India Sikh Students Federation which was devised to serve as a nursery for the Sikh polity, has failed to shape up to the design. There is a big void all around.

Broadly, the Sikh polity today revolves around two Akali Dais -Badal and Amritsar. Then, there are *mayaki* Sikhs, who are rather a permanent fixture.

Akali Dal (Badal) is, verily, the premier Sikh organisation. It carries the mantle of traditional Akali leadership, and has the strength and weakness of that heritage. The Sikhs have passed through frustrating times not because of their cause not being just, or lack of any sacrifices, but because the leadership has been oblivious of the change in time that assumption of levers of power by Brahminism in 1947 entailed. Seen in that context, Akali Dal (Badal) falls far short of requirements of the time.

Akali Dal (Amritsar) is a conglomeration of contradictory forces, mainly a get together of self-seeking persons moving in different directions. Something about some of the people manning it, later.

Now, something about the class of what Kesar Singh Chhibbar (*Gurbilas*, 1769), aptly called '*mayaki* Sikhs' - materialist or mercenary Sikhs. They, for pelf and power, and state patronage, would go to any extent to stab the Panth in the back without any qualms or pangs of conscience. This class has throughout been and continues to be beyond redemption. It is remarkable that Congress has been able to attract a body of them right from Gandhi's forage into Sikh polity in 1921. For instance, the quantum of damage to Sikhism caused by Giani Zail Singh and Buta Singh during the last two decades is astounding. Presently, it serves the Delhi Durbar to continue to play havoc with political processes in the Sikh community. Such elements are to the knowledge of every one. But more dangerous are those in league with them and wear a mask.

Tohra and Talwandi have already done tremendous harm to the Sikh polity. It is doubtful that they would go into voluntary retirement. They should be shown the door, the way it was shown to Barnala. Tohra was an infiltrator from undivided CPI and still maintains his links with CPM with Surjeet serving as the focal point. His strength lies in his stranglehold over the SGPC elected in 1979. And, the Government which can order fresh elections has not done so all this while, firstly, to prevent the leadership of the community passing on to the radical hands, and secondly, to discredit it as an institution and replace it by a set up in which the government has a control. That is also applicable to Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee. That was the main reason why the governments from that of Jawaharlal Nehru to Indira to Rajiv, even after agreeing to the enactment of All India Gurdwara Legislation, did not do so. The Brahminical leaders would prefer to bring about disintegration of India rather than permit consolidation of Sikhism.

The only qualification of Bhai Manjit Singh to claim leadership in post 1984 era was the principle of heredity - as brother of Bhindranwale's chief lieutenant, Bhai Amrik Singh. The principle of heredity played havoc even during the period when Guruship became hereditary in the family of Guru Ram Das. Who were Prithi Chand, Dhir Mal and Ram Rai? Descendants of Guru

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Ram Das, and blood relation of the fifth, the seventh and the eighth Sikh Gurus. And, why were all of them ostracised from the Sikh panth, and the Khalsa prohibited to have social interaction with them?

Bhai Manjit Singh is presently a prisoner in the hands of *Mayaki Sikhs* and has no independent existence of his own. He has already been used as a pawn in the decision leading to boycott of elections by the Panthic organisations in 1991-92, giving a cakewalk to Congress(I) in Punjab. His mentor and principal architect, Gurbachan Singh Monochahal has been eliminated in cold blood. Could one expect Manjit Singh to see the writing on the wall? Could he sever his links with 'Mayaki Sikhs' and renounce his political ambitions? That would be an act of maturity, and a miracle to happen. It is debatable whether he can follow his father's avocation and take to *dharam prachar*, propagation of the Sikh faith - a field in which there is a great void. Already, since Beant Singh's induction as Chief Minister, the drug and narcotic mafia against whom Sant Bhindranwale had led a campaign, has re-emerged as a powerful factor in Punjab under state patronage. Bhai Manjit Singh is young and has a long way to go. He can wait till maturing into the cut-throat game of politics being played by the union government. He has also to correct his vision. That also applies to Kartar Singh Narang of Babbar Akali Dal of dubious character.

The Sikhs at present need a leader who can come up to international standing. From among the present leaders, only Sirmranjit Singh Mann stands apart. He speaks of the Sikh problem in terms of international conventions and covenants, of human rights and dignified living. He talks of solution of the Sikh problem within the framework of article 51 of the Constitution. His statement that the Sikhs would not participate in the event of war with Pakistan, and his intervention in the Babri Masjid - Ram Janam Bhoomi imbroglio reflected the depth of his understanding of the issues involved. His apparent inconsistency reflects characteristics of a great mind. These were the qualities which at the time of Indian independence both the Congress and the Muslim League leaders had, and not the Sikh leaders.

Mann's emerging as a full fledged leader of the Panth was thwarted by V.P. Singh government's deliberate decision not to hold Punjab elections in early 1990. BJP, CPM, Congress(I)and a section of Janta Dal, combined to prevent blossoming of Mann on Punjab scene, as he was trailing a new light on the political horizon. He has, by now, committed some tactical mistakes in showing critical lack of characteristics of some of the Sikh leaders. That may have been upshot of the ground situation. He has since been special target of the police and security forces, and detained for unnecessarily long periods on trivial matters. There has been a conscious effort to ground him.

As of now, the Sikh polity is in need of a realignment of forces. One can think of Badal, Mann, Sukhjinder Singh to be men ideologically working on the same wave length. The difference in their nuances is one of degree and not of kind. They have been propelled by the same objective - the good of the Panth. They together with men like Justice Ajit Singh Bains and a host of others, could constitute a Presidium to charter the Sikh polity through the difficult period that lies ahead.

Now, as to the party plank. Mann Akali Dal had adopted a correct attitude in defining its goal in 1990 within the framework of the Anandpur Sahib Resolutions. It is red rag to Brahminical Hindus and they are allergic to any mention of Anandpur Sahib. The Sikhs can very well rephrase their demands within the framework of the Cabinet Mission Plan on the basis of which the Sikhs, as a third party - apart from the Hindus and the Muslims - had thrown their lot with the Hindus. The

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Cabinet Mission Plan held out certain assurances to the Sikhs as a people, not to Punjab whatever its shape. Jawaharlal Nehru, the modern day Chanakya had, inauguranting the Constituent Assembly in end-1946, spoken that, "Adequate safeguards would be provided for minorities. It was a deliberation, a pledge and *an undertaking before the world*, a contract with millions of India, and therefore *in the nature of an oath*, which we must keep." Of course, these types of Brahminical oaths on *gayatri* and mother cow were taken in post-Khalsa period before Guru Gobind Singh by the hill Chiefs and broken. In May 1947, both Gandhi and Nehru, realising the immorality of their action and betrayal of *Bharat Mata* (convoluted form of *Kali Mata* - the second consort of Lord Shiva), had wanted the Viceroy, Lord Mountbatten, to thwart the forthcoming partition, and enforce the Cabinet Mission Plan as an Award. The commitments under the Cabinet Mission Plan were not honoured. Hence, the Sikh representatives did not sign the Constitution adopted in November 1949. Whatever the demands of other provinces/states for devolution of powers, the case of the Sikhs derives its sustenance from the Cabinet Mission Plan, or the Indian Independence Act which flowed from it, and Nehru's solemn undertaking, however falsely undertaken, before the world. Patel had lurking fears of the injustice done to the Sikhs in violation of solemn commitments being taken up by the United Nations Organisation. The Sikhs have an impeccable case to take up at the international level.

Those who talk of Khalistan must understand its background. It was a plank put forth by the Brahminical Hindus in the mouth of the Sikhs to deny them there dues. History justifies that reading. Jawaharlal Nehru offered Tara Singh a Khalistan right in September 1947, to retard their rehabilitation. Again, when the Sikhs asked for Punjabi Suba purely based on language, Nehru would wantonly put it forth as a demand for Khalistan. That happened in 1950s and 1960s. His basic plank was refusal to treat the Sikhs as equals in Hindu dominated India. It was in that light that Indira did the mischief of centre's maintaining its stranglehold over Punjab's resources when Punjabi Suba became inevitable in 1966.

With a view to plan and justify the massacre of the Sikhs of genocidal proportions, Indira propped up the movement for Khalistan on the lines laid down by Jawaharlal Nehru:

* The beginnings were made in 1971 when Dr. Jagjit Singh Chauhan raised the slogan of Khalistan. That helped Indira localise schism in Hindus and Sikhs, and between Jan Sangh and Akalis in Punjab.
* Reflecting a change of tactics, she, assisted by her thoughtless cronies like Zail Singh and Darbara Singh, contumaciously brought up a couple of set ups committed to Khalistan in 1978 and managed for them a lot of publicity.
* The next stage was marked by Dr. Chauhan's simultaneous announcement of formation of Khalistan in 1980 from London and Amritsar - the announcement at the latter place being made with the cooperation of Indian intelligence set ups.
* Both Dal Khalsa and Chauhan followed to set up Khalistan Governments-in-exile in June 1984 in U.K. following Operation Bluestar.
* Rajiv followed his mother's policy in arranging an announcement of Khalistan in April 29, 1986 from Golden Temple Complex. The Indian intelligence helped to promote a number of set ups in North America, with a view to promote the concept of Khalistan to give the Sikh movement a direction in USA and Canada.

Bhindranwale said that he was not for or against Khalistan, but would accept it, if offered. Though he stated that the day the army enters the Golden Temple would mark the foundation of Khalistan, he did not make a formal declaration, despite facing the armed might on June 5-6, 1984.

Shaikh Mujibur Rehman in East Pakistan formulated the well known six point plan for autonomy. That was not acceptable to the established elite of Pakistan. They chose to throw him, as also the eastern part, out of Pakistan. The Brahminical Hindus have not treated the Sikhs on the basis of equality right from 1947. Would they agree to a decentralisation, as envisaged in the Cabinet Mission Plan, to let the Sikhs a breathing space? Would not they prefer to throw them out of the union rather treat them as equals? The Sikhs should let the onus of breaking the Indian unity rest upon the intolerance of Brahminical Hindus.

The Sikhs must first understand the 'enemy'. The word here is used in the same sense that the Indian army used it on the eve of Operation Bluestar. Guru Gobind Singh had spent over a decade for an indepth study of ancient Indian lore, for a different purpose. But when Senapat presented him his translation of Kautilya' or Chanakya's *Arthshastra*, he had rewarded him suitably. Right from Daronacharya's asking for right thumb of Eklavya as his *dakshina*, offering, the Brahmins have not viewed equanimously the exercise of power by non Brahmins. And, Daronacharya justified his act, firstly, that the sort of perfection attained by Eklavya in archery was beyond the competence of Arjuna whom he wanted to make the foremost archer of his times: and, secondly, that such attainments would make tribals like Eklavya to aspire for sovereignty. That must be nipped in the bud. In short, the Sikhs must deeply study the ancient shastras -*Mahabharta*, *Ramyana*, *Manu Smriti*, Kautilya or Chanakya's *Arthshastra* and others to get at the roots of Brahmins guile and chicanery. They must make a deep study of Brahminical Hindu psyche. For instance they must have on fingertips the characteristics of the main actors in Mahabharta. The Sikhs position is that of Pandavas: they have been cheated out of their rights by numerous Kauravas led by Duryodhana and Dushasana, who were not willing to yield the Pandavas in inch of land. Men like Bhisham Pitamah who understood Pandava position to be just, continued to sit by in the *Darbar* when Daropati was being disrobed, and in the final battle sided with the Kauravas - the forces of evil and injustice. Once the Sikhs realise their position to be that of Pandavas in the ongoing struggle, issues will automatically frame themselves, and everything will fall in its perspective.

The Sikhs must get out of the rut. They must learn from the currents of history. It suits them to present their case to the west, particularly the Americans, in the terms acceptable to them. This is all the more so as ethnic and racial violence, especially against the minorities has become part of international life. Who knows, if India chooses to go the Yugoslav way in the next half a decade or so, the Sikhs would need international sympathy and support to evolve a viable place for themselves. Even otherwise the need for international surveillance seems must, to escape from the Hindu stranglehold which is getting tighter. And, they can get international support on the plank of greater autonomy, not secession. The Cabinet Mission Plan (with Defence, Foreign Affairs, Communications, and necessary Finance) which Gandhi and Nehru were willing to accept as an Award, leaves sufficient scope for the states to emerge as viable units. Or, may be American pattern of Presidency with devolution of powers and all-powerful Governors in states being elected directly by the people.

But the Sikh people in USA and Canada are caught up in the web of Khalistan woven by the infiltrators or agent provocateurs of Indian intelligence setups. This is a common knowledge that there are, as of now, about 400 agents of Indian intelligence agencies, mainly from Punjab police,

functioning in USA and Canada: and these elements have infiltrated in strength various Sikh set ups. In Canada the slogan of Khalistan provides a powerful stimulus to a lot of elements to seize Gurdwaras for their funds. Both in USA and Canada the Khalistan lobby operates without regards to the ground situation back home in Punjab. Such elements are playing into the hands of New Delhi. This is not to disregard the sense of deep hurt in the Sikh community at the events of 1984 and sense of alienation generated to demand Khalistan.

It must be understood that when one declares for Khalistan, one declares war on India. The declarations of Khalistan managed by Indira and Rajiv were with a view to show to the world that atrocities whatever they were perpetrating on the Sikhs were with a view to uphold the integrity and sovereignty of the Indian union, and hence justified.

A declaration of Khalistan or a declaration of war is not needed for a people to fight for their liberation. A Hungarian scholar, Istvan Kende, after considerable research has observed {*Development & Peace*, Vol. 4, Spring 1983, pp. 35-56) that since the Second World War, over a period of thirty years, 1945-76, 120 wars have been fought in 71 countries involving the forces of 84 countries, and not in a single case a formal declaration of war was made. India has fought three wars with Pakistan without making a formal declaration of war. In recent times Russia and Chechenya have fought a full fledged war without making a formal declaration.

The self-styled Panthic Committees, or individuals who made formal declarations of Khalistan have done so either under external inspiration or without much deliberation or even basic knowledge as to how such struggles are organised and conducted.

It is always better to be part of a wider set up on honourable terms, of equality. The impending emergence of United Europe is a pointer to that. But the 64 inn Dollar question is, would the Hindus throw up a man of vision and statemanship to save the Union? Time is running out.

IX

If the Sikhs miss the opportunity which will be presenting itself to them in the second half of this decade, because of continued treachery from within and inherent incapacity of their leadership, Sikhism might well be on its way out in India. Already, considerable cowardicing has taken place among the Sikhs all over India including Punjab which has seen killings of genocidal proportions. In the face of actual and incipient violence and state terrorism, a sizeable section of the Sikh youth especially school going children have cast off their *keshas*.

Guru Gobind Singh at the time of bringing the mission of Guru Nanak to its culmination by embodying the Khalsa, had, according to his *Autobiography*, sought and obtained God's benediction. Was that benediction limited by the time framework, say three centuries or so? In case the benediction was not circumscribed by limitations of time, would extermination of the Khalsa from the face of India, contradict that? Technically speaking, No. It is surmised that since the Khalsa has spread out almost all over the world, with sizeable Sikh communities in North America, U.K., East Africa and South-East Asia, extermination of the Khalsa from India would not invalidate God's continued benediction over the Khalsa which would continue to exist in other parts of the world. That, however, would be a superficial reading of the situation. The extermination of the Khalsa from India would inevitably have its adverse impact and chain reaction on the Sikh communities all

over the world, and lead to their extermination. Or, perhaps, their identity would be beaten out of shape. Harbhajan Yogi's bringing Tantric fetishes in Sikhism is a case in point. What will survive would be something different than what the Gurus had envisaged.

Didn't Guru Gobind Singh envision circumstances when the Khalsa could lose God's benediction? Didn't he say that when the Khalsa ceases to maintain its distinctive (*niara*) character, and when it adopt *bipran ki reet*, characteristics of non-conformers, he would not look after their state of existence?

Would the Sikhs realise the gravity of the situation in view of the persistent and considered onslaught by the crafty Brahminical Hinduism underpinned by the state power? Right from the Guru period, opposition from within has been the bane of the Sikh Panth Notwithstanding that, the Sikhs have stuck to the main path and rallied around the correct leadership. That puts an added responsibility on the mass of the people as well to disown leaders of questionable integrity and doubtful capacity. The Panth is in need of an enlightened and committed leadership to charter clear from the shoals that lie ahead.

X

Who knows that the tumults of the next few years may throw up a man of destiny who would assert his undisputed leadership of the Panth unhindered by Brahminical contrivances and internal dissensions. That would be an extreme situation, needing extreme answers. The Sikhs should be mentally prepared for that.

Let us await the turbulent drama as it unfolds itself.

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